

**EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF AN OUTCOMES-
BASED EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAMME: A CASE
STUDY OF CRYSTAL POINT SECONDARY SCHOOL
(KWAZULU- NATAL)**

BY

MANUJ KUMAR GOKUL



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SUPERVISOR: MR. LESLEY LE GRANGE

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

MANUJ KUMAR GOKUL

ABSTRACT

After the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the transformation of the entire education system began with a plethora of new policies introduced by the Department of National Education (DNE). Among these, under the title of Curriculum 2005, the DNE introduced an outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum for schools.

Before the planned implementation of OBE in the Senior Phase of the General Education and Training (GET) band, the DNE decided to conduct a pilot programme at the beginning of 1999. The intention of the programme, among others, was to test the practical implementation of the new curriculum policy. However, this programme was aborted by the DNE in March 2001. There has been no review of the programme since it was suspended.

The aim of this study is to document the experiences of educators in an OBE pilot programme in a single school. This study is significant because it sheds light on realities faced by schools with the practical implementation of curriculum policy. The data generated from the study might therefore be useful to the broad education community.

The findings of the study suggest that the shift from policy into practice is not a simple process. The educators interviewed in the study indicated that they were faced with many obstacles and challenges such as large class sizes, lack of resources and inadequate training and support that impeded the implementation of OBE. They became “frustrated” and were “relieved” when the programme was aborted. These difficulties suggest that contextual realities need to be considered in the development of curriculum policy. In addition, in order to translate policy into practice key aspects of curriculum, i.e. curriculum development, learning materials and training, must be fully in place and in alignment.

The decision to follow an OBE model was made by the DNE with little participation by the broader education community. However, it is apparent that the DNE cannot achieve success on its own. Since OBE is likely to remain with us for a very long time, this study concludes with recommendations for the successful implementation

of OBE. The recommendations are made on the assumption that there is a need for full participation of all stakeholders to bridge the 'gaps' between policy-making and policy implementation.

ABSTRAK

Die aftakeling van apartheid in Suid-Afrika het gepaard gegaan met 'n proses van transformasie in die onderwys. Dit het tot die gevolg gehad dat 'n hele aantal beleidsdokumente die lig gesien het, ev.: die Uitkoms- gebaseerde onderwys (UGO) model het in skole onder die vaandel van Kurrikulum 2005 verskyn.

Voor die beplande implementering van UGO in die Senior fase van die Algemene Opvoeding en Opleidings (GET) band/ fase, het die Departement van Nasionale Onderwys (DNO) besluit om 'n loodsprogram aan die begin van 1999 in werking te stel. Die doel van die program was, onder andere, om die praktiese implementering van die nuwe kurrikulumbeleid uit te toets. Hierdie program is egter deur die DNO in Maart 2001 beëindig. Tot dusver is die program nie heroorweeg nie.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die ervarings van opvoeders in 'n UGO loodsprogram in 'n enkele skool te dokumenteer. Die studie is betekenisvol aangesien dit lig werp op die werklike uitdagings wat die skole in die gesig staar, met die praktiese implementering van kurrikulumbeleid. Die data wat tydens die studie geproduseer is, mag dus betekenisvol vir die onderwys gemeenskap wees.

Die bevindinge van die studie dui daarop dat die proses van transformasie vanaf beleid na praktyk 'n gekompliseerde proses is. Die betrokke opvoeders met wie daar onderhoude gevoer is, het die volgende struikelblokke aangedui: groot getalle leerders in die klas, 'n gebrek aan hulpbronne, en ontoereikende opleiding en ondersteuning met die implementering van UGO. Van die opvoeders was gefrusteerd en was verlig toe die program misluk het. Hierdie uitdagings bring mee dat gekontekstualiseerde werklikhede in ag geneem moet word wanneer kurrikulumbeleid ontwikkel word. Om beleid in praktyk te implementeer, vereis dat sleutelaspekte soos kurrikulumontwikkeling, leermateriaal en opleiding ten volle in plek wees.

Die besluit om 'n UGO model te implementeer was 'n eensydige besluit van die DNO sonder veel deelname van die breë onderwysgemeenskap. Dit is duidelik dat die DNO nie sukses op sy eie kan behaal nie. UGO is tans 'n realiteit wat waarskynlik nog 'n lank- deel van die stelsel gaan wees. Hierdie studie maak aanbevelings wat moontlik

tot meer suksesvolle implementering van UGO kan lei. Die aanbevelings berus op die aanname dat daar 'n behoefte is aan ten volle deelname deur alle rolspelers ten einde die gaping tussen beleidsmaking en praktiese implementering te oorbrug.

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M.K. Gokul

Phoenix, KwaZulu- Natal

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

My parents:

Daddy

for setting me on the course of academic pursuit, despite limited resources;

Ma

for her boundless love and support throughout my life.

&

My family:

My adorable wife **Sheela**

and two sons **Jashir Lee** and **Lamir Sting**

from whom I borrowed the time to pursue my academic goals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: SETTING THE FOCUS

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Purpose of the study	1
1.3	Critical questions	2
1.4	Rationale for the study	3
1.5	The significance of the study	4
1.6	Limitations of the study	4
1.7	Background to the study	4
1.7.1	Introducing Curriculum 2005	5
1.7.2	Outcomes-Based Education	7
1.7.3	The Involvement of Crystal Point Secondary School in the OBE Pilot Programme	9
1.8	Preview of the chapters that follow	11

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON OBE

2.1	Introduction	13
2.2	The roots, forms and reasons for the recent emphasis on OBE	13
2.3	Definition of outcomes	15
2.4	International experiences of OBE	16
2.5	Experiences of OBE in South Africa	19
2.6	Types of research done on OBE in South Africa	21
2.6.1	Theoretical studies	21
2.6.2	Observational studies	29
2.6.3	Case studies	30
2.7	Summary of chapter	32

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	33
3.2	The theoretical paradigm informing the research	33
3.3	Research method: A case study	35

3.4	Negotiating access to the setting	38
3.5	Techniques used in the production of the data	38
3.5.1	Sampling	38
3.5.2	Interviews	39
3.6	Analysis of data	40
3.7	Validity	41
3.8	Ethics	42
3.9	Summary of chapter	42

CHAPTER FOUR: EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF AN OUTCOMES- BASED EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAMME

4.1	Introduction	43
4.2	The context of the study	43
4.3	Profile of the educators interviewed	43
4.4	Educators' experiences of an Outcomes- Based Education Pilot Programme	44
4.4.1	The decision- making process regarding participation in the pilot programme	44
4.4.2	The change from the traditional approach to the Outcomes- Based Education	47
4.4.3	Obstacles, difficulties and challenges facing educators in implementing Outcomes- Based Education	49
4.4.4	Revealing the successes and achievements in Outcomes- Based Education	57
4.4.5	Teachers' experiences of learners' responses	60
4.4.6	" The Bombshell": the suspension of the pilot programme	62
4.4.7	Useful OBE strategies currently employed	64
4.4.8	Lessons learnt from the OBE Pilot Programme	65
4.4.9	Concluding comments by educators on the OBE pilot programme	68
4.5	Summary of chapter	69

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	70
5.2	Findings and discussion	70

5.3	Recommendations	85
5.4	Summary of chapter	90
5.5	Conclusion	91

BIBLIOGRAPHY	93
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ANNEXURE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	98
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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE FOCUS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Outcomes-based education (OBE) has been the buzz- word amongst educators and educational leaders since the introduction of the new South African curriculum (Curriculum 2005) in 1997. Its advocates are optimistic of this new approach and suggest that it will “equip all learners with the knowledge, competencies and orientations needed for success after they leave school or have completed their training. Its guiding vision is that of a thinking, competent future citizen” (Department of Education, 1997a: 1). Others who predict that outcomes-based education will fail and also cause damage to education in South Africa, however, have made criticisms (Jansen, 1998: 322). Which of these two views are correct, is difficult to say because the curriculum was introduced only recently. Whilst it may be too soon to evaluate the success of the new outcomes-based approach to teaching in South Africa, it is not too early to evaluate outcomes- based programmes that have thus far been implemented in the country. The data and findings from such studies serve as a form of feedback or evaluation on what actually transpires in the classroom. Such feedback is paramount to address shortcomings with respect to curriculum development, learning materials and teacher training in order to improve teaching and learning. This research study is a small- scale study that has been undertaken with this purpose in mind.

In this chapter I outline the purpose of the study, the rationale for the research, the significance of the study, and sketch the background to this study.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to document the experiences of educators in an outcomes-based education pilot programme involving learners in the Senior Phase of the General Education and Training Band (GET). The documentation of the experiences of educators in an OBE pilot programme would provide a window into the practical

implementation of the new curriculum policy. Considering the fact that there was no evaluation of the pilot programme when it was aborted by the DNE, the documentation of the educators' experiences in this study might be of value to the broader education community.

The GET band is the first of the three bands of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The GET band begins at Pre-school (grade R) and ends in the Senior Phase (grade 9) where learners will receive a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC).

1.3 CRITICAL QUESTIONS

The educators' experiences of an OBE pilot programme will be investigated by seeking answers to the following critical questions:

- Who was involved in decision-making regarding participation in the OBE pilot programme?
- How did educators' experience the change from teaching in the traditional approach to teaching in the outcomes-based approach?
- Were there any obstacles, difficulties and challenges in implementing OBE during the pilot programme?
- Were there any successes and achievements in implementing outcomes-based education during the pilot programme?
- How did educators' experience the suspension of the OBE pilot programme?

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

As an educator I have experienced many instances involving educational policy initiatives where the voices of educators are often not heard. Notwithstanding the involvement of educators in teacher union bodies and subject/learning area committees, the voices of many educators on matters related to curriculum development and implementation are not often heard. The OBE pilot programme might be a case in point, and has, therefore been selected for investigation. After more than two years of participation in OBE, the Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Education Department suspended the pilot programme. There was no evaluation of the programme when it ended in March 2001. The experiences of the educators were not noted. This study will attempt to capture the unheard voices of these educators, and document their untold stories. By drawing on their experiences, educators would comment on the practise of outcomes-based education in the pilot programme. This would provide answers to the critical questions stated earlier, which will offer an indication of the practical implementation of the new curriculum policy.

As an MPhil student, with an interest in education, this study provides me with an opportunity to probe deeper into the educators' experiences of OBE, to see things as they are in real life contexts. The DNE has provided teachers with comprehensive policy documents and training manuals, and has held 3 to 5 day workshops for teachers involved in the pilot programme. Amongst other things, I am interested in finding out the extent to which these measures have equipped teachers to become facilitators and curriculum agents; how they are experiencing their new roles; and the extent to which they are successfully delivering the new, intended curriculum. My study thus affords me the opportunity to pursue my curiosity, and to attempt to see things as they happen in real life contexts.

My study has been undertaken for the academic purpose of completing a mini- thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Philosophy (MPhil) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch. My study will therefore be of limited scope so as to fulfil the requirements of a mini- thesis.

1.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although much literature has been written about OBE at the level of theory, little has been written about how it is/was implemented and experienced by classroom educators. The data generated in this study from a specific pilot programme will provide an account of how OBE was perceived and received, problems experienced and how these problems were addressed, successes and failures, its impact on the work of educators, and what lessons there might be for educators and educational leaders. My study will provide a window to the experiences of educators in an outcomes-based education pilot programme.

The data generated from this study could be useful to:

- The school management team for future curriculum planning and professional development initiatives at the school.
- Educators in other schools involved in OBE who could make use of successful ideas and strategies adopted by the school in the case study.
- Curriculum planners who should take cognisance of the experiences of practising educators. This information might be vital for future curriculum planning as well as the planning of future training programmes for teachers.
- Subject Advisors who provide support and plan workshops in areas of need.
- Researchers who focus on aspects of outcomes-based education, for example, long-term research on OBE classrooms.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

My study has been limited to a single case (school) for the purpose of the academic requirements of a research report. The use of a single method of data collection in this case study, viz. interviews, is a limitation of this study since it did not allow for triangulation of the data. Time constraints and the limited scope of the study did not allow for triangulation.

Although my study is of a limited scope, Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1976: 3) argue that it is possible to generalise from case studies. This form of generalisation, however, is different from the understanding of generalisation in empiricist/ positivist research. The generalisation from case study will be explained in Chapter Three: Research Methodology.

1.7 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.7.1 Introducing Curriculum 2005

Following the democratisation of South Africa in 1994, the transformation of the entire education system became a high priority. At the heart of the education and training system lies the curriculum, therefore as early as 1995 the DNE embarked on an ambitious process of curriculum transformation. Schreuder (1999 cited in Carl, A.E *et al*, 2000: 158) identifies some of the aspects of the pre-1994 school curricula that could have contributed to an unsustainable South African community, and, therefore necessitated fundamental transformation. These include:

- “the philosophical and theoretical foundations of school curricula, combined with a political policy of the past of deliberate under-resourcing of Black education, that contributed to a highly discriminatory education system;
- content-based school curricula that favoured those who had access to well-resourced schools and who came from privileged homes, thereby making issues of inequity in education and schooling even more visible;
- dominant epistemological views of knowledge as a commodity that find expression in traditions of transmission teaching and rote learning;
- remnants of a fundamental pedagogy in our teachers’ and education authorities philosophy of what the real function of education is, and resulting in undemocratic practices at many levels of education, from institutional management to classroom practice;
- thousands of people having been denied access to quality education on the basis of age, skin colour, or mental or physical handicaps”.

The apartheid curriculum thus “perpetuated race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and emphasised separateness, rather than common citizenship and nationhood” (DoE Senior Phase Policy Document, 1997c: 1). There was thus a need to create an education and training system which:

- departs from the Christian National Education which empowered a select few;
 - serves the economic and social needs of South Africa and its people;
 - enables South Africans to develop our resources and raise levels of economic growth to become internationally competitive;
 - creates literate, creative, critical and productive citizens;
 - offers much more access to information, skills and experience;
 - allows for greater flexibility in obtaining qualifications for competence;
 - commits itself to an integrated approach to education and training
- (North Durban Region Curriculum 2005 Grade 7 Re-Training Workshop, Document 2: General Advocacy, 1999: 1).

The creation of such an education system involved interaction between political parties, teacher unions, education departments, industry, trade unions and business. The result of this interaction was the formulation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the framework within which reform in schools and other education institutions were to be effected. The NQF is an eight level instrument with three identified bands General Education and Training; Further Education and Training; and Higher Education and Training. A qualification is awarded on completion of each of the NQF levels. Thus, the NQF is an instrument that provides lifelong-learning opportunities for learners regardless of age, circumstances, gender and level of education and training (Department of Education, 1997a: 4). To give shape to the visionary ideas of the NQF, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established.

At the heart of the change of the education and training system was the introduction of a new curriculum- Curriculum 2005. SAQA adopted eight Learning Areas as the framework for the GET band. They are Language, Literacy and Communication; Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Mathematical Sciences; Natural Sciences;

Technology; Arts and Culture; Human and Social Sciences; Life Orientation; and Economic and Management Sciences. The intention of the Learning Areas is to integrate the ideas and knowledge from traditional school subjects within the Learning Areas, thus doing away with the rigid compartmentalisation of knowledge in different, isolated and exclusive ‘boxes’ (North Durban Region Curriculum 2005 Grade 7 Re-Training Workshop, Document 2: General Advocacy, 1999: 17).

One of the key features of this new curriculum was a shift from a content-based to an outcomes-based approach to education. This paradigm shift, the NQF document suggests, is a necessary prerequisite for the achievement of the following vision for South Africa:

“A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading a productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice” (Department of Education Senior Phase Policy Document, 1997c: 1).

1.7.2 Outcomes-Based Education

The Department of Education defines outcomes-based education as “a learner-centred, result-oriented approach premised on the belief that all learners can learn and succeed. It implies that learning institutions control the conditions for success” (Department of Education, 1998 cited in Killen, 1999: 7).

The aim of outcomes-based education is not only to increase the general knowledge of the learners, but to also develop their skills, critical thinking, attitudes and understanding (Department of Education, 1997a: 8).

The South African government adopted a transformational approach to OBE, with a clear emphasis on critical outcomes. These are broad, generic cross-curricular outcomes, which underpin the Constitution. These outcomes “will ensure that learners gain the skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success as well as to the success of their family, community and the nation as a whole” (Department of Education, 1997c: 14).

The SAQA critical outcomes state that learners will:

1. Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made,
 2. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community.
 3. Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
 4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
 5. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
 6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
 7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation
- (Department of Education, 1997c: 15; Van Der Horst, 1997: 49-50).

There are a further five statements that were not originally written as outcomes, but in order to contribute to the full personal development of each learner, and social and economic development at large. It is intended that these should underlie any programme of learning to make individuals aware of the importance of (them). These statements, referred to as Developmental Outcomes, are:

1. Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
2. Participating as a responsible citizen in the life of local, national and global communities.
3. Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
4. Exploring education and career opportunities.
5. Developing entrepreneurial opportunities

(Department of Education, 1997c: 15; Van Der Horst, 1997: 50).

Because the critical outcomes are broad and long-term, they provide only general guidelines for what should be taught in schools. More specific guidelines for teaching are developed by looking at the critical outcomes in the context of a particular Learning Area. This produces the specific outcomes¹ that refer to the specification of

¹ Specific Outcomes have since been removed from Curriculum 2005.

what learners are able to do at the end of a learning experience. This includes skills, knowledge, and values that inform the demonstration of the achievement of an outcome or a set of outcomes. As learners progress through the levels, it is expected that they will engage in more complex learning processes and that they will produce more complex evidence to demonstrate their achievement of outcomes. The design of the programmes that will allow students to achieve the specific outcomes has been left to curriculum designers and teachers. However, SAQA has identified assessment criteria (broad observable processes and products that could be accepted as evidence that outcomes have been achieved) and range statements that indicate the scope, depth, and level of complexity of the content, processes and contexts with which the learner should engage in order to reach an acceptable level of achievement.

Originally it was announced that January 1998 was an absolute non-negotiable date for the implementation of Curriculum 2005, or in effect OBE, beginning with grades 1 and 7 and a gradual phasing in of the other grades with the year 2005 the deadline. However, the implementation of Curriculum 2005 for learners in grade 7 only began in the year 2000.

1.7.3 The involvement of Crystal Point Secondary School in the OBE Pilot Programme

Before the planned implementation of OBE in the senior phase (grades 7 to 9), the Department of National Education decided that two schools be identified in each of the different regions in each province where a pilot programme could be conducted. The programme was arranged to commence with learners in grade 7 in 1999, and end when learners have completed grade 9 in the year 2001. At the end of grade 9 it was expected that learners would write a General Education and Training Certificate examination.

The intentions² of the OBE pilot programme were:

- To evaluate samples of Learning Programmes supplied by the DNE.
- To evaluate samples of Learning Source Materials to be used in the senior phase.
- To evaluate the practical implementation of the new curriculum policy.

The Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Education Department determined the criteria for selection of schools with the aim of involving a sample of rural, urban and peri-urban schools that holistically reflected the demographics of the South African schooling community. The North Durban Region of the Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Education Department selected Crystal Point Secondary School as one of its two OBE pilot schools. This school was selected because:

- It was a peri-urban school.
- Its learner population included Indians and Blacks.
- It was a secondary school that housed grade 7 learners. This was necessary for continuity of the senior phase pilot programme.
- It was in close proximity to the other pilot school. This was intended to foster networking.
- It was in close proximity to the North Durban Region Office for monitoring and support.

An offer was made by the North Durban Region to the school to participate in the OBE pilot programme. The school accepted this offer.

The table below indicates the number of learners and teachers that participated in the OBE pilot programme at Crystal Point Secondary School:

² Information on intentions of the pilot programme and the reasons for selecting Crystal Point Secondary was provided by Mr. A.H. Bhayat – Curriculum Co-ordinator: Regional Curriculum Unit, North- Durban, in telephonic communication on August 24, 2001.

YEAR	GRADE	NUMBER OF CLASS UNITS	NUMBER OF LEARNERS	NUMBER OF TEACHERS
1999	7	2	90	13
2000	8	5	234	22
2001	9	5	230	18

In March 2001 the OBE pilot programme was suspended. The decision to suspend the pilot programme was taken by the Department of Education Province of Kwazulu-Natal after the Department of National Education failed to give a guarantee to the Province that the FET band would be in place in 2002.

1.8 PREVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS THAT FOLLOW

To orientate the reader on the contents of the chapters that follow I have included a summary of each of the chapters.

Chapter Two: Review of literature on OBE

In this chapter I review literature available on OBE. The literature review outlines the origins, forms and reasons for the recent emphasis on OBE. The literature captures the effects and experiences of OBE implementation internationally as well as in South Africa. I also provide an exposition of the types of research that has been done on OBE and emphasise that research on OBE has been limited mostly to theoretical studies, a few observational studies and some case studies.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter provides a methodological framework within which the research was conducted. It provides data on the paradigm that informs the study, the method of

enquiry, the technique used to gather the data, the procedure by which the data was collected and validated, and the consideration of ethics in research.

Chapter Four: Case Study – The stories of educators’ experiences of an OBE pilot programme

This chapter provides a brief overview of the context of the study, i.e. Crystal Point Secondary School: the geography of the area, the history of the school and the surrounding community, the culture, the staff – learner ratio and classes sizes. The main focus of this chapter is the documented accounts of the experiences of four educators involved in the OBE pilot programme.

Chapter Five: Findings, discussion and recommendations

This chapter analyses and discusses key themes/trends that emerge from the stories of the four educators. The trends are examined and evaluated in terms of what has been said in literature and the teachers’ reports. This chapter also includes recommendations based on the findings reported. The chapter ends with a conclusion that provides a summary of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON OBE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the literature on outcomes-based education. The literature review outlines the origins and forms of OBE, and the rationale for the recent emphasis on OBE. The main purpose of this chapter is to examine literature documenting the experiences of educators of outcomes-based education in South Africa and internationally, and to ascertain the different types of studies that have been undertaken in OBE.

2.2 THE ROOTS, FORMS AND REASONS FOR THE RECENT EMPHASIS ON OBE

One of the key aspects of Curriculum 2005 is OBE. A review of literature indicates that OBE has its roots in earlier work on educational objectives, competency-based education, mastery learning, and criterion-referenced assessment (Van Der Horst & McDonald, 1997: 9-13; Killen, 1999: 4). These four educational approaches form the theoretical foundation of OBE, suggesting that OBE is not a totally new approach to teaching. According to Killen (1999: 5), "...it is the systematic application of educational ideas that have been part of good educational practice for many years". However, the mastery learning approach espoused by Bloom and the curriculum objectives of Tyler were not free from behaviourist influences which "have been widely discredited for treating people like machines to be processed towards pre-determined ends" (Taylor, O Donoghue & Clacherty, 1993 cited in Le Grange, 2000:23). Glatthorn (1993 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 23) has warned that one of the pitfalls of OBE is falling back on behavioural outcomes. This is a serious concern in South Africa considering the poor resource context and the fact that historically teachers have been systematically deskilled and have operated in an education milieu entrenched by behaviourist teaching practices (Le Grange, 2000: 23).

Outcomes-based education also has many forms (Malcolm, 1999: 77). Evans and King (1994: 1) also subscribe to this view and suggest further that protagonists of mastery learning such as Block, Efthim and Burns include OBE in their conceptual overview of mastery learning, although mastery learning is not the only way to implement OBE. Furthermore, Spady describes OBE models in the USA that vary between themselves and are remarkably different, for example, from the Australian model. There are differences at the level of theory, variations in details and the ways the systems are interpreted and applied in schools. Despite their differences, and whether they are called 'National Curriculum' (United Kingdom), 'Profiles' (Australia), OBE (USA, Canada, South Africa), or National Standards (USA), outcomes-based education models share some common features. For example, they typically emphasise broad competencies and learning in the context of applications.

Malcolm (1999: 78) contends that, because outcomes-based education is first and foremost a management system- an approach to managing curriculum control, curriculum design, assessment and reporting, teachers and accountability, change and innovation- it can therefore appeal to different interest groups in different ways. This view is supported by Killen (1999: 1-2) who suggests that the adoption of outcomes-based education in recent years is attributed to increasing calls in Western society for greater attention to be paid to the outcomes of education so that the return on investments in education (particularly public education) could be evaluated. These increasing calls for accountability was one of the reasons for the rapid spread of outcomes-based education in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom during the 1980's. In South Africa, the move towards outcomes-based education has some of the economic accountability features of OBE as in other countries, but its broader purpose of assisting the transformation process also emphasises equity, access, redress, and quality assurance as key elements of the accountability process.

In my view the intentions of adopting an OBE approach to education in South Africa are good since they attempt to address the legacy of the pre-1994 apartheid curriculum. However, I feel that the process of curriculum reform and implementation has been too rushed, therefore many flaws have since surfaced. Firstly, the decision to adopt an OBE approach to education was made by the DNE with little participation

by the broader education community, especially teachers. Secondly, contextual realities have not been adequately considered in decision-making regarding implementing OBE in South Africa. Downplaying contextual realities such as ill-prepared teachers and poor resourced contexts may militate against the very intentions of the new curriculum.

2.3 DEFINITION OF OUTCOMES

Clarity regarding the definition of outcomes is important to enable one to understand this approach to education. Spady and Marshall (1994 cited in Lorenzen, 2000: 1-2), one of the pioneers of the current outcomes-based approach, defines outcomes as "... clear, observable demonstrations of student learning that occur after a significant set of learning experiences". These demonstrations reflect three things: (1) what the student knows; (2) what the student can actually do with what he or she knows; and (3) the student's confidence and motivation in carrying out the demonstration. A well-defined outcome will have clearly defined content or concepts, that is demonstrated through a well-defined process beginning with a directive or request such as 'explain', 'organize', or 'produce'.

Outcomes-based education is thus a learner-centred, results-oriented system (Boschee & Baron, 1994: 193-196; Van Der Horst & Mc Donald, 1997: 7; Lorenzen, 2000: 2). As opposed to the traditional approach that requires a person to complete a prescribed course and spend a certain amount of time in the classroom, this approach requires that the knowledge, skills, attitudes and thinking patterns that a person needs to function in the world must be identified and that learning opportunities must be created in order to ensure that the desired outcomes are in fact realised. This involves a commitment to the success of every learner. The philosophy of outcomes-based education focuses on decisions and choices in the interests of the diverse needs of the learner within a process of continuous improvement and development (Carl, 2000: 6-7). Thus, the underlying beliefs of OBE are: (1) All students can learn and succeed; (2) Success breeds success and; Schools control the conditions of success (Spady and Marshall, 1991: 67).

According to Boschee and Baron (1994: 93) and Van Der Horst and McDonald (1997: 13-14), the strength and success of an outcomes-based approach lies in the following: (1) What the student is to learn must be clearly identified; (2) The progress of the learner is based on demonstrated achievement/mastery; (3) A variety of instructional strategies and assessment techniques need to be available to meet the needs of each learner; and (4) Adequate time and support need to be provided so that each learner can realise his/her maximum potential.

In my view the underlying principles of OBE, with its focus on providing an education that is in the interest of the diverse needs of learners, might be an appropriate approach to education in South Africa. However, the following are crucial in order to succeed in an OBE approach and therefore must be given urgent attention: teachers need to be adequately trained to become curriculum agents; they need to be provided with resources; and they need to be equipped with skills to manage large class sizes. It is my view that OBE is likely to fail in South Africa if these issues are not addressed.

2.4 INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF OBE

Despite the appeal of outcomes-based education, research documenting its effects is fairly rare. An earlier study reported that existing evidence was largely perceptual, anecdotal, and small scale, and a recent search for additional published information led to the same conclusion (Evans & King, 1994: 1). Despite these limitations, the small but growing body of OBE research indicates that OBE has met with success in certain instances and has failed in other instances for various reasons.

Brandt (1994: 1-2) in an overview titled, *Is Outcome-Based Education Dead?* suggests, on the one hand, that disputes over plans to launch OBE in certain states in the USA “left reformers baffled, discouraged, and defensive”. In some places the word outcome was avoided and schools denied that their program had anything to do with OBE. On the other hand, in other places, OBE programs flourished, for example, Johnston City in New York where an impressive record of student achievement had been achieved (Brandt, 1994; Evans & King, 1994). According to Brandt (1994: 1),

the controversy exists because OBE means different things to different people. Programs described as outcome-based are often very different from one another, and some similar programs use other labels, such as results-based or performance-based education. The educators in Johnston City identified the plan as the Outcomes-Driven Developmental Model (ODDM). According to Brandt (1994), Spady would characterise the Johnston City program as transitional because it emphasises mastery of traditional academic disciplines along with some cross-disciplinary outcomes such as the ability to work in groups.

The implementation of OBE by other states also showed positive results. In Utah districts where OBE implementation was more complete there were higher student achievement gains. In Missouri, at the beginning of 1986-87, scores on the mastery tests as well as norm-referenced tests have significantly risen state-wide each year in nearly every subject area (Evans & King, 1994).

Another successful outcomes-based programme is reported by Mary Webster which focussed on outcome-based education in a post-secondary setting (Lorenzen, 2000: 2-3). Webster taught marketing at a community college. Her outcome-based method required students to master basic material before they could move on to higher material. This often meant that students were forced to repeat tests or quizzes several times. Students were forced to work hard because a grade of "C" was not considered a sign of having mastered a competency. Webster found that this method reduced the failure rate and at the same time increased student learning and retention.

Outcomes-based education programmes have not always met with success. Schwarz and Cavener's (1994: 328-329) findings from a study of the implementation of transformational OBE by a High School English department in Oklahoma indicate that a heavy workload, local resistance to OBE, jargon and poor learner response were some of the problems experienced. A major difficulty in implementing OBE emerged from the heterogeneously grouped classes. Every teacher had difficulties finding strategies to deal with a classroom where learners' skills ranged from non-reading learning disabled to honours learners. In theory all learners would rise to the level of teacher expectations. In reality, according to Schwarz and Cavener (1994: 329) the "...expanded opportunities" needed to provide for those moving quickly through each

activity often consisted of helping those who could or would not complete their assignments. It was not possible to meet the needs of all students who needed one-on-one remediation and instruction, to facilitate the activities of the class, and provide expanded opportunities for advanced students.

As a result of the difficulties in the implementation of OBE, Cavener (Schwarz and Cavener, 1994: 329) struggled with a severe loss of self-confidence and a sense of frustration. She felt as if she was “brainwashed” by OBE advocates. The question that still remains is: With all the high ideals and logical-sounding rhetoric, why has OBE not succeeded in this classroom? Schwarz and Cavener (1994: 330-331) contend that OBE did not work here because school reform movements have failed and continue to fail because, (1) they ignore the complexity of schools as human systems; (2) they leave the power relationships in school unchanged (the implementation of OBE is prescribed by a powerful bureaucracy); and (3) some of the assertions of OBE are philosophically questionable (theoretical questions about the nature of knowledge and learning are significant problems).

The international experiences thus indicate, on the one hand, that OBE has been successful where a transitional program emphasising mastery learning of traditional academic disciplines with some cross-disciplinary outcomes were implemented, for example in Johnston City. In Okhlahoma, on the other hand, the implementation of transformational OBE was a failure at Ponca City High School (Schwarz and Cavener, 1994: 329). The problems encountered in Okhlahoma illuminates the importance of taking the following into cognisance with regard to a complete reform of curriculum:

1. Curriculum reform must not be a top-down process, driven by bureaucracy. The success of OBE depends on the involvement of all role-players, including the local community.
2. The impact of a new curriculum on the workload of teachers.
3. The abilities of learners to respond positively to the new curriculum.
4. The implications of implementing a curriculum to meet the needs of every learner in heterogeneously grouped classes.

Among other factors, due cognisance given to the above, during curriculum reform will undoubtedly result in a decision to adopt and implement a realistic curriculum where implementation will bring success.

2.5 EXPERIENCES OF OBE IN SOUTH AFRICA

OBE is a fairly new approach in South Africa. It is, therefore understandable that literature on implementation of OBE in South Africa is limited. Literature that is available, however, suggests that teachers are not meeting with success in implementing an outcomes-based approach to teaching in South Africa. Reeves (1999) provides an example of a micro-study of the teaching of natural science to grade 7 learners in 10 Western Cape schools that highlights problems with implementing OBE in certain schools in South Africa. The study, referred to as “Focus on Seven”, involved a sample of eleven teachers who had committed themselves to using a common set of learning activities and curriculum materials for their lessons. The eleven intact classes yielded a sample of 416 learners.

Reeves’s (1999) findings suggest that OBE was not very effective in the schools where it was adopted. The gain in learner achievement was “relatively modest”. According to Reeves (1999: 62) the present changes to the curriculum are unlikely to impact substantially on the quality of teaching and learning in majority of schools in South Africa. Reeves (1999) lists the following constraints with the implementation of the OBE curriculum: (1) limited time to teach as a result of disruptions at schools as a result of meetings, sporting activities, teacher ill-health, teachers having to counsel parents during teaching time, and low learner attendance after the examinations; (2) limited resources and equipment and large class sizes, for example up to 66 learners in one class; (3) learner-centred methodologies being difficult to implement in less adequately resourced schools, and learner-centred methods that undermine learners’ low levels foundational learning area knowledge and lack of competence in reading and writing; and (4) teachers’ efforts to engage learners with natural science concepts, values and processes being constrained by both their limited resources of learning area knowledge and teaching skills. Teachers’ inadequate subject matter knowledge and skills, conceptual confusion arising from teachers’ attempts at integration

between subjects and school, and the challenges of everyday life hinder the achievement of outcomes. According to Reeves (1999: 45), improving learner's natural sciences knowledge and performance depends primarily on improving their opportunity to engage with natural science concepts, content and processes in structured ways.

In another study Jansen (1999) reports on a research conducted on the implementation of OBE in Grade 1 classrooms in 1998 in Kwazulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, involving thirty-two classrooms. The study consisted of three components: (1) a baseline study leading to (2) an impact assessment, followed by detailed (3) case studies of four Grade 1 classrooms from different schools. This study was guided by the question: how do Grade 1 teachers understand and implement outcomes-based education in their classrooms?

The findings of this study include the following:

- (1) Teachers hold vastly different understandings of OBE, even within the same school.
- (2) Teachers display considerable uncertainty about whether their practices in fact constitute OBE, irrespective of the aggregate levels of institutional resources or years of personal teaching experience.
- (3) Teachers uniformly felt that their preparation for OBE implementation was inadequate and incomplete.
- (4) Teachers strongly expressed the view that OBE was not implementable in the early part of the school year with young children.
- (5) Teachers generally claimed that there were some things that they were doing differently since the introduction of OBE, but that they were mainly teaching as they did before OBE.

Whilst OBE is intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa, the studies discussed above suggest that this might be a tall order. Among the many obstacles facing the successful implementation of OBE, the inadequate training received by teachers stands out as a huge stumbling block. Since many of them have not grasped an understanding of OBE, they are teaching as they did in the traditional

approach to teaching. In addition, the lack of resources and large class sizes has also not made the implementation of OBE any easier.

2.6 TYPES OF RESEARCH DONE ON OBE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.6.1 Theoretical studies

A review of literature on the kinds of studies done on OBE in South Africa indicates that most research involves the theoretical and philosophical issues related to OBE. A study of literature indicates that OBE is fiercely contested at different levels of the discourse. The areas of contest revolve around epistemological, moral, political and implementation difficulties of OBE (Mason, 1999: 137).

Jansen (1998), was one of the first educationists to open the debate by providing a critical analysis of OBE. He outlined ten major reasons why OBE will not only fail, but will also have a negative impact upon schools in South Africa. According to him, “OBE will fail, not because politicians and bureaucrats are misinformed about conditions of South African schooling, but because this policy is being driven in the first instance by political imperatives which have little to do with the realities of classroom life” (Jansen, 1998: 322).

According to Jansen (1998) some of the reasons for the expected failure are: the language and terminology being too complex, confusing and at times contradictory; flawed assumptions about the relationship between curriculum and economic development and, about what happens inside schools, how classrooms are organised and what kinds of teachers exist within the system; the limited financial resources to support such a degree of innovation; and the increasing administrative demands it places on teachers. Jansen also argues that OBE “trivialises curriculum content as it claims to be a potential leverage away from the content coverage which besets the current education system”. He further contends that OBE “threatens to atomise and fragment curriculum knowledge” by organising knowledge around discrete competencies, and also OBE overlooks the important cross-curricular and interdisciplinary demands encountered in learning a complex task. Furthermore, it assumes

that the acquisition of knowledge proceeds in a linear way such that one outcome is linked in a stepwise direction to another. Holland (1990 cited in Jansen, 1998: 326) contends that this is one of the most common criticisms made of OBE and yet it appears to be ignored by bureaucrats in the move towards implementation.

Mason (1999: 138), in response to Jansen (1998), contends that whilst some of Jansen's criticisms such as poor financial resources and lack of committed teachers and poor administration in schools are legitimate, the situation can be turned around by intense interventions at all levels. He suggests that perhaps the implementation of OBE will provide a catalyst for transformation. Mason suggests that Jansen's concern that OBE trivialises curriculum content is legitimate. According to Mason (1999: 137) "...in its attempts to dispense with the rote learning of propositional knowledge that typified so much of schooling under apartheid, Curriculum 2005 errs in the opposite direction by emphasising too strongly procedural forms". He draws on Ryles's distinction between propositional and procedural knowledge and argues that a less radical version of OBE, in which teachers integrate thoughtfully propositional, procedural and dispositional knowledge, will better address apartheid education's legacy. Mason (1999: 138-139) believes that Jansen is wrong in his interpretation that OBE atomises and fragments curriculum knowledge. Instead, Mason (1999) argues that OBE attempts to break down the occasionally artificial barriers between disciplines in its organisation of knowledge around integrated competencies rather than with disciplines.

Rasool (1999: 172) is strongly critical of progressive academics and researchers that are critical of the curriculum but "have not provided a semblance of an alternative of any sort". He responds eloquently and credibly to Jansen's criticisms of OBE, while at the same time acknowledges Jansen's contribution to curriculum debate (Klopper, 1999: 230). Rasool (1999: 172) contends that the strength of Jansen's monograph, through its dissection of OBE, lies in the fact that it exposes the stark reality that this curriculum innovation, like any other, is not without its inherent limitations and therefore cannot be simplistically viewed as a panacea to solve all of South Africa's educational and socio-economic ills- an aspect strikingly absent in discourses emanating from the state education departments. In addition, Jansen's article illuminates possible impediments that must be overcome to ensure the overall success

of Curriculum 2005. Rasool (1999: 173), however, argues that while it is conceded that some of the reasons deserve serious consideration by authorities, others need to be questioned for what they are worth. For example, he contends that if the language of OBE is too complex, it ought to be watered down; that curriculum does impact of the economic development of a country; and far from side-stepping values and ethical considerations, Curriculum 2005 makes ample provision for a balanced curriculum through Learning Areas such as Human and Social Sciences, Arts and Culture and Life Orientation which incorporates values such as non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, equality and nation-building.

The epistemological orientation of OBE has also been strongly criticised by Jansen (1998: 324) as well as Le Grange (2000: 23) and McKernan (1993 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 23-24). OBE curriculum development is based on a design down model. This implies that classroom activities are developed to assist learners to attain certain predetermined outcomes. Such an approach to curriculum development is based on a certain understanding of knowledge. McKernan (1993 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 23) challenges the 'means-ends' OBE stance that view knowledge as instrumental rather than as contextual, emergent and constructed. He contends that some activities or educational encounters are worth doing for reasons other than serving some instrumental purpose as a means to a pre-determined outcome. He sees education as a social-reflexive process that must be negotiated in classrooms on a daily basis. No amount of teacher proof curricula or lists of outcomes can change these facts (McKernan, 1993 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 24). Instead of being predetermined, outcomes should emerge from the social processes of interactions between teachers, learners and curriculum content. Le Grange (2000: 24) thus contends that the epistemological orientation of OBE therefore may stifle learner creativity and militate against meaningful educational experiences.

Literature on OBE is also critical of the emergence of OBE in the context of a narrowing of education policy agenda after the democratisation of South Africa in 1994. Chisholm & Fuller (1996 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 24) argue that there has been a shift in education policy from earlier talk of people's education and robust civil participation to a technocratic discourse emphasising centrally defined OBE, pupil-teacher ratio, and a unified system. It may thus be asserted that this narrowing of the

education policy agenda will make moves towards greater development, equity, participation, and redress unlikely (De Clerq, 1997 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 24). What is likely to occur is the favouring of interests of privileged sections of society, thus widening the existing gap, benefiting a minority of schools and alienating the majority of teachers and learners (De Clerq, 1997: 127; Reddy & Le Grange, 1996: 20 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 24). Ironically, concerns such as development, equity and participation are likely to remain unrealised.

The narrowing of the state's policy agenda has thus unfolded in a centrist curriculum development process in South Africa. The decision to follow an OBE model in South Africa was decided by the DoE with very little participation by members of the broader education fraternity. Technical 'expert' committees made the decision on which outcomes to include and exclude, largely excluding grass- roots teachers (Le Grange, 2000: 24, Jansen, 1998: 325). This occurred despite the fact that curriculum research throughout the world has shown the importance of developing professional capacity of teachers and involving them centrally as key agents in the design and implementation of new curricula (De Clerq, 1997 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 24).

Killen (1999: 1) also recognises that OBE has critics as well as advocates. In his article *Outcomes-Based Education: Some issues to consider in the South African Context*, Killen (1999) therefore responds briefly to some of the concerns that are commonly expressed about OBE. He suggests that South Africa's adoption of the transformational approach to OBE with an emphasis on critical outcomes so that "learners gain skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success as well as to the success of their family, community and the nation as a whole" (Killen, 1999: 3) is similar to the approach taken in Australia when the government developed a set of eight key competencies that were intended to promote the skills necessary to enhance Australia's overall educational and economic competitiveness and support the convergence of general and vocational education.

In response to the critics of OBE in South Africa, Killen (1999: 30) says "first understand it, then try it, then criticise it". He contends that no system of education is perfect, but the South African governments' commitment to OBE as a vehicle for reforming education is so strong that all teachers and parents should at least give it an

opportunity to be tested. Perhaps the final judgements should not be made until reliable data are available to suggest whether or not it has reformed education in a way that benefits the majority of the population.

Killen (1999: 30) argues that it is true that in some countries OBE has not met with the success that its advocates hoped for. The experiences in other countries should not be ignored, but neither should they be used as an excuse for opposing OBE before considering, objectively and thoroughly, how it might work in South Africa. As always in education, it is good to learn from the successes and mistakes of others, but it is important to base your opinions on personal experience rather than prejudice. By taking a balanced view, it should be possible to identify the aspects of OBE that work and those that do not.

In an attempt to make outcomes-based education work in South Africa, Jeevanantham (1999) suggests that the new curriculum takes on an *Afrocentric* approach as opposed to the previous *Eurocentric* approach to education. Jeevanantham's (1999) article titled *Towards 2005: proposals for curriculum change* is aimed at alerting educationists to be sensitive to what goes into the new curricula in order not to repeat the errors of the previous curriculum. Jeevanantham emphasises that the *Eurocentric* curricula that dominated our education system in the past served the minorities with success and failed the majority of our learners. Jeevanantham (1999: 53) argues for an *Afrocentric* curricula, an Africanisation of OBE where "material" from the "indigenous culture" such as "traditional political systems, philosophies and codes of behaviour, literature, music and dance". He adds that language, literature, music, dance, history, geography, and thought such as philosophical and theological belief systems, etc. will signify to subjugated people that their cultural experiences are worthy of study and it will serve to elevate a subjugated culture onto the level of other cultural forms that are regarded as worthy of intellectual interest and academic pursuit.

The crucial point, according to Jeevanantham (1999), is that, in the system of outcomes-based education, black children are going to be assessed for skills, attitudes, values, and competencies that they are able to demonstrate in some way. Their assimilation and reproduction might be much easier if these capacities or dispositions

are relevant for them because they link it with the world in which they live. According to Jeevanantham (1999: 53), it is time that the African experience as well as those of dominated people, move from the periphery to the centre of collective consciousness.

Despite the many criticisms of OBE, Le Grange (2000: 27) suggests that “OBE may be an appropriate vehicle for transformation”. However, this cannot be realised overnight. In order to eradicate the legacies of apartheid and replace them with the qualities of democracy, equality, justice and peace, a shift beyond the *languages of critique* prevalent in the South African curriculum reform debate is required. Further, the utopia of *languages of possibility* need to be recognised and instead, a *language of probability* for curriculum reform for South Africa needs to be seriously considered. The South African OBE model provides spaces for transformation, which did not exist previously. The outcomes are stated broadly enough to avoid behaviourist pedagogical practices. OBE also provides pedagogical spaces for transformative classroom practices that may involve critiquing the outcomes themselves (Le Grange, 2000: 28).

Since OBE is likely to remain with us for a long time, and the fact that the DoE cannot achieve success in implementing the new curriculum on its own, it is crucial that all stakeholders, including academics, make a contribution to achieve success in implementing OBE. Rasool (1999: 172) as well as Le Grange (2000: 28), therefore challenge academics to rethink their roles and engage critically in transformative social action. Le Grange (2000: 28) contends that various possibilities exist for partnerships between universities and schools, between universities and state departments and between universities and non-governmental organisations. Partnerships between universities and schools, through initiatives such as collaborative action research, can assist in transforming practices in schools and re-defining the role of academics in contemporary South African Society (Schreuder & Le Grange, 1998 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 28).

In support of OBE, Rasool (1999: 174) argues that the realities of constant change, globalisation, transformed workplaces, new competitive pressures and world-class performance standards are reasons why South Africa needs OBE as it enters the global arena of the twenty-first century.

The debates on OBE, responses to the criticisms, and proposals for successful implementation that dominated earlier literature were followed by literature on the evaluation of the implementation of the new curriculum and OBE in South Africa, for example, *The Report of the C2005 Review Committee*; and *C2005 Review and the Policy Process*. These reports were based on research on the appraisal of the implementation of the new curriculum. Recent literature indicates that early in 2000, the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, realised that the implementation of Curriculum 2005 has not gone according to plan at all; that there was more confusion and uncertainty among teachers and that an urgent reappraisal of the situation was required (Carl, *et al*, 2000: 163). In a press statement (*Embargo: Tuesday, 8 February 2000*, cited in Carl, *et al*, 2000: 163) he announced the appointment of a Review Team to conduct an investigation into and provide him with recommendations on the effective implementation of the new national outcomes-based curriculum.

The Report of C2005 Review Committee, Executive Summary, 21 May 2000 in Pretoria highlighted the following:

1. Although a review of OBE was not part of the brief of the Review Committee, it did report that there was overwhelming support for OBE at all levels of the education system. However, the levels of understanding of C2005 varied within and between schools, as well as between teachers, trainers and officials.
2. The structure and design of Curriculum 2005 was seriously flawed. Firstly, the language used in documents was complex and confusing. Secondly, the inclusion of 8 Learning Areas in the General Education and Training Band resulted in 'overcrowding' of the curriculum. Thirdly, the design strongly promoted integration but was weak in promoting sequence, pace and progression.
3. There was no alignment between curriculum and the assessment policy as well as a lack of clarity regarding assessment policy and practice. Too much time was spent managing and administering assessment, leaving minimal time for classroom work.
4. Training of teachers was inadequate. Because the focus was on learning new terminology, little attention was paid to the substance of OBE and C2005.

5. Learning support materials were often unavailable. This was mainly due to the absence of basic resources such as books, pencils and duplicating machines. In addition, teachers did not have the time to develop their own materials.
6. There was a lack of follow up support for teachers from school management, district and provincial education departments.
7. Time- frames were unmanageable and unrealistic. There was widespread agreement that the implementation of Curriculum 2005 had been too rushed. It was implemented before it was ready for presentation and without the foundations for good, inspiring training, effective monitoring, and a meaningful, ongoing support process being in place.

The Review Committee proposed that a revised and streamlined outcomes-based curriculum be introduced within manageable time- frames to achieve the social and educational goals of a curriculum for the 21st century.

The Council of Education Ministers (CEM) supported most of the proposals of the Review Committee (Decisions of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) on the recommendations of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 19 June 2000: 1-5). This can be summarised as follows:

1. A new structure and design would be adopted. The Council appointed a team of curriculum experts to develop a National Curriculum Statement. The National Curriculum Statement should contain 4 key design features, which replace the 8 design features of C2005. The 4 key design features are the critical outcomes, learning area statements, learning outcomes and assessment standards. The simplified language of the new curriculum is expected to be user friendly.
2. A co-ordinated national strategy for teacher training will ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement the new curriculum. Ongoing support will ensure that teachers are kept abreast of the latest developments in the curriculum.

3. The task team responsible for the National Curriculum Statement should provide publishers with a clear statement on the production of textbooks. The Council directed the Department of National Education to investigate ways of improving the availability of Learning Support Materials (LSMs) and establish mechanisms through which the budgets available for LSMs are targeted toward providing a basic supply of textbooks to the poorest learners.
4. It was agreed that curriculum implementation could not continue at the same pace as before. It was necessary to phase out the implementation of Curriculum 2005 and phase in the implementation of the revised curriculum. In June 2001 a new Curriculum Statement would be released and inform all role players of the structure and implementation of the revised curriculum. It was agreed that the implementation of the present curriculum continue in grade 4 until it is overtaken by a revised, streamlined curriculum. The implementation of OBE in Grade 8 would continue as planned in 2001.

Thus, theoretical studies and reports indicate that OBE was highly debated in South Africa. Such debate is crucial to the understanding of the new and sophisticated approach to education because proposals and recommendations that emanated from such studies were directed towards the success of OBE. These debates have provided a platform for the evaluation of OBE, and have led to the formulation of a revised OBE in the form of the Draft National Curriculum Statement that was released by the DoE in July 2001. All stakeholders have been invited to make their inputs towards a revised OBE by December 2001 in order to arrive at an OBE curriculum acceptable to the South African community.

2.6.2 Observational Studies

Observational studies on the implementation of OBE in South Africa are sparse. In the "*Focus on Seven*" study, the researchers' analysis of classroom interaction was based, inter- alia, on video recordings of natural science teaching as well as the observation of lessons (Reeves, 1999). The findings of the study have been discussed earlier. (see page 19, paragraph 2).

The study by Jansen (1999) provided an account of a study of implementation of OBE in Grade 1 classrooms in thirty-two classrooms. Whilst most data were collected using the questionnaire method, observational studies were also used as a technique to collect data. The findings of this study have been discussed earlier. (see page 20, paragraph 2).

These studies documenting classroom observation of the implementation of OBE indicate that it (OBE) has not been successful. It is therefore important that more observational studies be undertaken in other schools to evaluate the success of OBE in other parts of South Africa.

2.6.3 Case Studies

Research on OBE has also been undertaken in the form of case studies. Jansen's study (1999) discussed earlier involved case studies in four Grade 1 classrooms.

Another relevant case study is a participatory research project that introduced teachers in a localised community to outcomes-based education and environmental education (Le Grange & Reddy, 2000). The case study involved a collaborative learning programme development through a partnership between the University of Stellenbosch and teachers from primary schools located in a Cape Town suburb, Grassy Park. The researchers anticipated that the new intended curriculum as stated in the policy documents of the DNE would present problems to teachers in the community. A series of workshops were facilitated by the researchers during which the participating teachers developed learning programmes (broad frameworks) related to local environmental issues. In their reflections on the process the researchers highlight the following:

1. Curriculum development and research cannot ignore the socio-historical context from which it springs and in which it occurs. This project was undertaken during a period in which teacher cutbacks and low teacher morale prevailed. This may be one of the reasons why only half of the schools in the area involved themselves in the project. However, the schools that participated in the process displayed an openness and willingness to participate despite the many obstacles and challenges they faced.

2. Teachers found difficulty in understanding and making meaning of the terminology related to the sophisticated system of OBE. It appeared as if teachers needed/wanted demonstration lessons that they could repeat in their classrooms. Teachers responded well and were willing to share their ideas concerning issues that they were familiar with (related to their existing practice and local environment) but were reluctant to share thoughts related to OBE. It became apparent that teachers would require a great deal of support and time if OBE was to be implemented in any meaningful way in their classrooms.
3. Teachers were grappling with OBE and the addition of environmental education may confuse them even further and create uncertainty about the new curriculum.
4. The use of policy documents was not the best place to begin. Teachers found it more meaningful when practical hands on activities were undertaken (Le Grange & Reddy, 2000: 24).

Le Grange & Reddy (2000) also emphasise that professional development opportunities for educators are crucial for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. The researchers contend that school-university partnerships can contribute to curriculum transformation if such partnerships are sustained. According to Le Grange and Reddy (2000: 25), hit and run five-day workshops conducted by the Department of Education (National and Provincial) hold little promise of contributing to transformation in South African classrooms.

The few examples of case study research undertaken to evaluate the implementation of OBE indicate there are numerous challenges facing the successful implementation of OBE such as poor resource contexts and teachers that are ill-prepared for an approach that is so sophisticated. However, the willingness amongst most teachers to learn more about OBE is a positive sign. Thus, adequate training, ongoing support and the provision of resources would contribute significantly to the successful implementation of OBE.

2.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The review of literature indicates that most of the literature on OBE has been written at the level of theory. Theoretical studies indicate that OBE has its roots in earlier educational approaches such as competency-based education and mastery learning. International studies reveal that OBE has been successful in some countries/states, but have failed in others. Evans and King (1994), on the one hand, provide examples of studies that indicate the success of an OBE approach. Schwarz and Cavener (1994), on the other hand, provide literature documenting the actual experiences of OBE by classroom teachers but suggest that there is a need for more research on OBE implementation efforts in a variety of school settings (1994: 7).

A review of literature also reveals that research on the experiences of educators of OBE in South Africa is limited to a few observational studies (e.g. Reeves, 1999; Jansen 1999); and case studies (eg. Le Grange & Reddy, 2000). From the literature reviewed it is evident that the lack of local community participation and support, lack of training, lack of resources and large class sizes are obstacles to the implementation of OBE. However, the literature reviewed indicates that there is willingness among many teachers to learn about this new approach. In addition, other role players such as academics that see OBE as a vehicle to achieve transformation are calling upon their colleagues to extend their roles from levelling critiques concerning OBE to transformative social action. Surely actions of this nature would yield positive results regarding the implementation of OBE.

From the literature reviewed it is evident that research on educators' experiences of OBE is not well documented. Therefore it may be concluded that the research undertaken in this study, documenting the educators' experiences of outcomes-based education, is relevant and important for evaluating and understanding the implementation of OBE in South Africa.

In the next chapter I provide a detailed explanation of the research methodology adopted in the study of educators' experiences of an OBE pilot programme.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design used in this study. A research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research question and the execution or implementation of research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 29). It is the overall plan of the study where the researcher indicates the steps that are taken to minimise error in the investigation, with the aim of producing reliable results. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 33) identify four elements of a research design. These are:

1. the purpose of the research;
2. the theoretical paradigm informing the research;
3. the context within which the research is carried out; and
4. the research techniques employed to collect and analyse the data.

Careful thought must be given to these elements (dimensions) to ensure coherence in the research study so that the validity of the findings will be maximised.

This chapter thus provides an exposition of the theoretical paradigm informing the study, the qualitative method and techniques used in the collection, production and analysis of data on the experiences of educators in an OBE pilot programme. It also includes a discussion on the measures undertaken to ensure the validity of the study as well as ethical considerations taken during the study.

3.2 THE THEORETICAL PARADIGM INFORMING THE RESEARCH

This study is framed within an interpretive paradigm. The terms interpretive (or interpretative) and naturalistic research are used to describe inquiries that focus on seeking meaning from individual experience. These terms encompass a large number of diverse methodologies, but interpretation is the key concept that links them (Gough & Mousley, 2000: 28).

Interpretive researchers make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting. The commitment to understanding human phenomena in context as they are lived, using context-derived terms and categories, is often referred to as phenomenology. This understanding, referred to as *verstehen* by social researchers, is a method of studying humanity through an empathetic identification with the other ('empathy', 'empathetic reliving'), a grasping of their subjective experience (Connole, 1993: 19; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 125).

In the interpretive approach to research, meanings are the essence of the 'findings'. The researcher strives to determine and report the sense individuals make of their social world as well as what lies behind the ways they act within it. Hence, the aim is to capture internal realities that people have constructed.

The underlying assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that social processes and participants' meanings in understanding and explaining their actions can be captured through the study of what people believe themselves to be doing. Interpretive researchers emphasise the personal and social worlds that people construct and people's behaviours within those worlds as products of the choices they make (Gough & Mousley, 2000: 31).

In the interpretive paradigm, the role of subjective interpretation is explicit- the researcher describes and discusses phenomena from a subjective position. Hence, the 'facts' can be selected and arranged in many different ways, and that what the researcher brings to a study will shape the personal judgements and frameworks of understanding that are called on in the construction of viable and useful accounts of the data. The researcher's background of ideas, experiences, and intention shape not only the research findings, but also the research experience itself (Gough & Mousley, 2000: 32).

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 124) interpretive research relies on first-hand accounts; tries to describe what it sees in rich detail; and present its 'findings' in engaging and sometimes evocative language.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 123), provide a succinct description of the interpretive paradigm by stating that researchers working in the interpretive tradition assume that people's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously, that one can understand others' experiences by interacting with them and listening to what is told, and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task.

In this research I used the case study method – an approach consistent with the interpretive paradigm. This approach allowed me to explore, in great depth, the “life worlds” of the educators involved in an OBE pilot programme

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD: A CASE STUDY

I used the case study method to capture the experiences' of educators who participated in an outcomes-based education pilot programme. Walker (1980 cited in Le Grange & Reddy, 2000: 22) describes a case study as “...the examination of an instance in action. It involves the study of particular incidents and events, and the selective collection of information on biography, personality, intentions and values. Case studies have in common some commitment to the study and portrayal of the idiosyncratic and the particular as legitimate in themselves”.

There are two broad categories of case studies: the single case study design and the multiple case study design. Stenhouse (1981: 6-7), however, further categorises case studies into four broad styles. These are:

- (1) the neo-ethnographic case study: a single case involving participant observation;
- (2) the evaluative case study: a single case or group of cases studied at depth as the evaluation of policy or practice will allow;
- (3) multi-site case study: based on condensed fieldwork on a number of sites and;
- (4) teacher research: classroom action research or school case studies undertaken by teachers who use their participant status as a basis on which to build skills of observation and analysis.

I chose to use a single case study that includes aspects of evaluative case study and teacher research. This allowed me to “probe deeply and analyse intensively” the experiences of educators who participated in the outcomes-based education pilot programme with a “view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which the unit under study belong” (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 106-107). It is important to note that the term generalisation used in interpretive case study research has a different meaning to the term generalisation used in empiricist/positivist research studies.

Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1976: 3) identify three different kinds of generalisations that are possible from case study. The first kind is from the instance studied to the class it purports to represent. The second kind is from case-bound features of the instance to a multiplicity of classes. Studies in which the case is selected as an instance of a class will be predisposed towards making these kinds of generalisations. Studies that do not begin by asserting the instance-class relation, however, will be inclined towards the third kind of generalisation: generalisation about the case. The first kind of generalisation is applicable to my study. The sample of educators’ experiences documented in this study can be generalised as the experiences of other educators involved in the participation of the pilot programme in the school.

According to Merriam (1991: 33) the case study has proved particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy. There are a number of other advantages that make case studies attractive to educational evaluators or researchers. These are:

- Case study data is ‘strong in reality’ but difficult to organise. In contrast, other research data is often ‘weak in reality’ but susceptible to ready organisation. This strength in reality is because they are down- to- earth and attention holding, in harmony with the reader’s own experience, and thus provide a ‘natural’ basis for generalisation;

- Case studies recognise the complexity and ‘embeddedness’ of social truths. By carefully attending to social situations, case studies can represent something of the discrepancies or conflicts between the viewpoints held by participants;
- Case studies, considered as products, may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation;
- Case studies are ‘a step to action’. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use for staff or individual self-development, for within-institutional feedback, for formative evaluation, and in educational policy- making.
- Case studies present research or evaluation data in a form that is more accessible to the public than other kinds of research reports, although this virtue is to some extent bought at the expense of their length. The language and the form of the presentation can be understood and is less dependent on specialized interpretation than conventional research reports. The case study is capable of serving multiple audiences. It reduces the dependence of the reader upon unstated implicit assumptions and makes the research process itself accessible. Case studies, therefore, may contribute towards the ‘democratisation’ of decision- making (and knowledge itself). At its best, they allow readers to judge the implications of a study for themselves (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976: 8-9; Cohen & Manion, 1994: 123).

Thus the advantages offered by the case study method made it appropriate for the evaluation of the OBE pilot programme. My decision to use a single case study method was ideal because it allowed me to engage in an in-depth study into the experiences of educators within limited time and make generalisations within a single school.

3.4 NEGOTIATING ACCESS TO THE SETTING

Before starting the research at Crystal Point Secondary School I obtained authorisation from the Department of Education and Culture: Phoenix District, the School Governing Board and the principal to conduct the study.

At a meeting held with the principal, I informed him of the research topic, the rationale for the study and the significance of the study. I provided him with a profile of the participants required for this study and we jointly compiled a list of potential participants.

I approached the first four potential participants. During a meeting with each of the participants I outlined the research topic, rationale, significance, method of data collection as well as issues related to confidentiality. The first four teachers agreed to participate in the study. I then negotiated the date and time of the interview with each of the teachers.

3.5 TECHNIQUES USED IN THE PRODUCTION OF DATA

3.5.1 Sampling

I decided to document a case study of a single school that was involved in the outcomes-based education pilot programme at the senior level of the General Education and Training Band. This school was selected for practical and purposive reasons. This school was one of the two schools in the Phoenix District that participated in the pilot programme. Since I am based at this school, it allowed for easy access to teachers. Furthermore, my involvement with the professional development of educators in the school has enabled me to establish positive working relationships with the principal and teachers. I thus believed that the educators would be comfortable and provide an authentic account of their experiences of outcomes-based education during the progress of the pilot programme.

The unit of analysis in this study was individual educators that were involved in outcomes-based education in the pilot programme. Since this was a small-scale study I decided to interview only four teachers. The teachers were selected purposively. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most (Merriam, 1991: 48). The sample in my study comprised two males and two females since this represented the gender groups that make up the teaching staff involved in the OBE pilot programme. Secondly, two of the teachers selected had more than ten years of teaching experience, and the other two had less than eight years of teaching experience. This allowed me to compare the experiences of the 'senior teachers' with those of the 'younger teachers'. Thirdly, the teachers selected were involved in different learning areas, thus providing data of the experiences in the various learning areas.

It is acknowledged that sample size is small and thus compromises the making of generalisations regarding the findings of this study.

3.5.2 Interviews

The technique used for the production of data in this study was interviews. Cohen and Manion (1994: 271) describe an interview as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focussed by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation. There are four kinds of interview that may be used specifically as research tools: the structured interview; the semi-structured interview; the non-directive interview; and the focussed interview (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 273).

I used semi- structured interviews in this study. This type of interview may be described as an open situation where the interviewer and interviewee has greater flexibility and freedom. Although the research purposes govern the questions asked, their content, sequence and wording are entirely in the hands of the interviewer. However, this does not mean that the semi-structured interview is a more casual affair, for in its own way it has to be carefully planned (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 273).

The semi-structured interview was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it allowed for an unstructured part at the beginning of the interview, which was intended to obtain biographical details of the respondents, and at the same time establish a climate in which the interviewee could respond more authentically to the questions raised during the interview. Secondly, the use of open-ended questions allowed the “flexibility and freedom of asking immediate follow-up questions” (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 293) to probe and delve deeper into the experiences of the educators; to clarify misunderstandings; encourage co-operation and establish rapport; and allow me to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes.

In this study two of the four teachers were interviewed at school during their non-teaching periods (free time) and two were interviewed at their residences because of limited free time during school hours. The duration of the interviews was approximately forty-five minutes. With the permission of the participants, I tape recorded the entire discussion. This allowed “for preserving the information collected in the interview” (Borg & Gall, 1979: 312; Merriam, 1991: 81).

The interview method was the only method used for the collection of data. Time constraints and the limited scope of the study did not allow for triangulation of the data. It is acknowledged that not having solicited data using another tool (and not triangulated the data) might have impacted on the verification of the data. However, it will be explained later that every effort was made to validate the data collected from the interviews.

3.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

I transcribed the four interviews from the audio- cassettes. I then listened to the tapes of each interview to ensure that the transcription was accurate and then immersed myself in the material by reading through them several times. In this way I familiarised myself with the data. I then adopted a bottom-up approach by examining the material and working out the organising principles, common views, patterns and trends as experienced by the educators during the implementation of the OBE pilot programme.

The key themes emerging from the data were then written as in-depth narrative reports outlining the experiences of the educators. Some recent definitions of narrative stress its universal appeal. Riessman (1993 cited in Casey, 1996: 212) declares that narratives “of personal experience ... are ubiquitous in everyday life ... telling stories about past events seem to be a universal human activity”. Taylor (1989 cited in Casey, 1996: 212) asserts that “we must inescapably understand our lives in a narrative form”. Polkinghorne (1988 cited in Casey, 1996: 212)) calls narrative “...the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful”. The narratives of experiences of educators in this study are intended to be rich in detail, persuasive and sometimes evocative.

Stenhouse (1981: 16) states that narrative, as a form of presentation has two great strengths: it is simple and direct to read and it is subtle. Its simplicity and directness is partly due to its being within a convention of representing the natural world that is thoroughly established, but it is also partly because the narrative form constrains the author from presenting his own logic. The subtlety of narrative lies in its capacity to convey ambiguity concerning cause and effect. The author does not ascribe clearly causes and effects.

3.7 VALIDITY

There are various methods of validity checks such as pilot tests and expert review rating of draft reports by participants. I used the method of pilot testing the interview questions by interviewing two educators involved in the pilot programme that were not included in this study. Borg and Gall (1979: 319) state that because an interview is a highly subjective technique all possible controls and safeguards must be employed in order to obtain ‘reasonably objective and unbiased data’. They therefore recommend that a pilot study be conducted before the actual interview in order to evaluate and improve the interview guide and the interview procedure. Thus, the pilot testing of the interview schedule assisted me in identifying ambiguities in the questions, clarifying wording and determining whether adequate information was being recorded.

The technique of face validity (member- checking) was used to validate the data from the interviews. After transcribing the interviews, the transcriptions were returned to each of the participants for validation and further comments where relevant. In addition, the final report on the experiences of the educators was also presented to each interviewee for validation.

3.8 ETHICS

In this study I conformed to the ethical principles pertinent to this form of research. The teachers were informed that participation was voluntary. The data collected was kept in strict confidence. Consent was obtained from the participants for their stories to be published as research. The participants in this study will remain anonymous. Their identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The study undertaken will thus not bring any harm to the participants, or any other person. Instead, the findings could be of benefit to the participants, and more generally to educators, educational leaders as well as researchers.

3.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The research design outlined in this chapter indicates that all the elements of a research design were given careful consideration in this study. The case study method and qualitative techniques of interviewing and narrative reporting are coherent with the interpretive framework of research. The coherence of these elements as well the steps taken to validate the study are aimed at minimising error in the investigation so that the reliability of the findings could be maximised. In this study a sample of four educators were selected in a single school, and their experiences are generalised in the context of the school. Whilst generalisations can be made from this study, more research should be conducted in more schools on outcomes-based education using a variety of methods and techniques. This will contribute to a better understanding of the implementation of outcomes-based education.

In the next chapter the data on the educators' experiences in an outcomes-based pilot programme are presented as an in-depth narrative.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF AN OUTCOMES- BASED EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAMME

4.1 INTRODUCTION

I begin this chapter by presenting the context in which the study was undertaken. This is followed by a profile of the four educators that were interviewed for this study. The experiences of the educators are then documented in terms of the responses that they provided to the questions in the interview. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the participants. The chapter ends with a brief summary of the experiences of the educators.

4.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Crystal Point Secondary School (CPSS) is situated in Phoenix, a township located approximately 25 kilometres north of Durban, along the coastal belt of Kwazulu-Natal. The former House of Delegates (one of the nineteen apartheid education departments) established the school in 1985. The staff comprises thirty-one Indian teachers employed in a permanent capacity and one teacher appointed by the school governing board. All the educators have teacher qualifications recognised in South Africa. The school has a learner enrolment of 1132 learners. Approximately 60 percent of the learners are Indian and 40 percent Black. Most of the learners attending the school live under poor socio-economic conditions in the areas of Phoenix, Kwamashu, Inanda, Amoati and Bhambayi.

4.3 PROFILE OF THE EDUCATORS INTERVIEWED

Educator 1, Miksha Raihman

Gender: Female

Years of Teaching Experience: 18 years

Learning Area: Language, Literacy and Communication (1999-2001)

Educator 2, Sanjay Soni

Gender: Male

Years of Teaching Experience: 15 years

Learning Areas: Human and Social Sciences (1999- 2000)

Arts and Culture (2000-2001)

Educator 3, Mary Solomon

Gender: Female

Years of teaching Experience: 08 years

Learning Areas: Arts and Culture (2000)

Human and Social Sciences (2001)

Educator 4, Mark Gordon

Gender: Male

Years of Teaching Experience: 07 years

Learning Areas: Life Orientation (1999-2000)

Technology (2000-2001)

4.4 EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF AN OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAMME

4.4.1 The decision-making process regarding participation in the pilot programme

In responding to the question on who was involved in decision-making regarding participation in the OBE pilot programme Raihman stated that early in 1999, at a meeting of the teaching staff, the principal informed educators that the Department of National Education had made an offer to the school to participate in the OBE pilot programme in the senior phase of the General Education and Training Band. She said

that it was sanctioned by the teachers who saw it as an opportunity for them to be part of the development of a new curriculum initiative.

Soni responded to the same question by stating that the staff was “informed” at a meeting that the school had the “honour” of being chosen by the National Department of Education as an OBE pilot school. He stated that it came across as if the school was given “a great opportunity” to take part in the project, and since the principal was new the staff did not voice any disapproval. Soni added that it was subsequently discovered that the principal actually took the decision to volunteer the school as an OBE pilot school.

Solomon’s response to the question was that “it just came down” from the principal that it would be beneficial for the school to become involved in the project, and teachers were “advised” that they should be part of it. She added that her first encounter with OBE was in 2000, when the school management team informed her that she would have to teach Arts and Culture in order to make up a full teaching load.

Gordon responded by stating that the teachers were “told” that the school was chosen as a pilot school.

When the pilot programme commenced in the third term 1999, problems such as the lack of direction, the lack of learning programmes and inadequate resources began to surface. Educators began to realise that, in their excitement to be involved in the pilot programme, they had forgotten to ask important questions during the decision-making process regarding their participation in the pilot programme.

When asked whether they felt that they should have been involved in the decision-making process all educators interviewed suggested that they were remorseful about having not being more involved in the decision-making process. Raihman remarked:

Actually, in retrospect, I think I should have been involved much earlier, considering I ended up overseeing the entire pilot, and had I known at the beginning that this was going to be ‘my baby,’ so to speak, I probably would have asked far more questions in terms of the offer that was made by the Department.

Soni also felt that he should have been more involved in the decision-making process because teachers are always involved in decision-making regarding all other events that take place at school. For example, the preparations of the school budget, subject choices for learners, the choosing of prefects, and guest speakers for school functions. He argued that teachers should have been given all the information and be jointly involved in the decision regarding their participation. He expressed his disappointment at not being involved in the decision-making by stating:

We should have made an informed decision, instead of being shoved into the programme. In hindsight, that is exactly how I feel.

The lack of deliberation and information in the decision-making stage was also strongly emphasised by Solomon. She responded:

Yes, I should have been involved, especially since learning areas such as Arts and Culture were not my fields of specialisation. I knew nothing about drama, about art. I was actually thrown in the deep end.

Gordon's response to the question whether he should have been involved in decision-making regarding participation in the pilot programme was also an emphatic "yes". He was critical of school managers making important decisions on behalf of teachers. He remarked:

In terms of your Manager and Department officials, it's not them that are going to be involved in the classroom. It's the teachers that are in the classroom. They should have been directly involved in that decision. With regard to the principal, how many lessons has the principal taught in OBE? Yet he has taken that decision together with the other officials.

The decision-making experiences of educators can thus be described as one in which there was uncertainty about how the school was chosen as a pilot school. This uncertainty began to surface as educators began to implement the new outcomes-based approach and can be attributed to the lack of information and the lack of involvement of educators in intensive deliberation in the initial decision-making stage, as Gordon remarked:

We didn't have much idea about the intention of the project. We knew that it was a new approach to education but did not know the specifics thereof.

Despite their limited involvement in decision-making, limited information, and not knowing what lay ahead, the educators agreed to participate in the outcomes-based education pilot programme.

4.4.2 The change from the traditional approach to outcomes- based education

The implementation of the OBE pilot programme, which commenced in August 1999, implied a change to a new approach to education. The participants in the interview were asked about how they experienced the change from the traditional content-based approach to outcomes-based education.

Raihman explained that the change was not unexpected. Her involvement in curriculum change processes actually began in the early nineties, when she was part of the teacher union structures and interacted with most of the draft education documents. This interaction created an awareness of the shortcomings of the traditional approach to teaching and the need to change to a new approach that would redress the legacy of apartheid education by developing critical thinkers and equipping learners for the world of work. Thus, when the change came, she was not the only one to embrace it, but also by other educators in the school. The change was embraced to such an extent that the basic principles of outcomes-based education were included in the school's vision and mission statement which outlines the goal of providing an education of quality and relevance, by equipping learners with skills, knowledge, values and attitudes. Thus, the school motto is stated as "Education for Living".

The implementation of OBE introduced new concepts and defined new roles and responsibilities for educators. Although the concepts of "teacher as facilitator" and "learner-centred" education were fairly new in the South Africa, Raihman was able to adapt because the concepts were closely related to what she was already doing in the classroom. She remarked:

The change from teacher to facilitator, for me as an individual, was not so much a major change for the very simple reason: even in the old approach I've allowed the participation of learners. The chalk and talk method, I would say, I used it once or twice in a week simply because it wasn't part of the ways I approach things. It was thus easy to adapt to the learner-centred approach.

Raihan added that she found it “easy to adapt” to the new outcomes-based approach because of her attitude towards change. She motivated:

I think change has to do with your individual attitude towards things. If you are open minded, you are welcoming challenges, and even though this may be difficult, you are looking at it in a more positive way. It's like asking, is the tumbler half full or half empty? It depends on what perspective you look at it.

Soni, on the other hand, responded that his experience of change from the traditional approach to outcomes-based education was “not easy”. He stated that he resisted a lot of the changes such as the merging of History and Geography into one learning area and the de-emphasising of the teaching of content. He argued that he was not prepared for the changes, and he was not suitably qualified to implement the changes that were taking place. He added that he did not have the necessary resources to teach effectively. He was disappointed with the support from the Department of National Education, which was non-existent to a great degree, and he felt as if he was “a small fish in a big pond”. These initial problems made him “flounder in the classroom” and for the first time in his fifteen years of teaching experience, he went into the classroom “unprepared and unconfident”. These circumstances convinced him that he was “not doing justice” to the learners. He consequently relied heavily on the old approach and boldly remarked:

I still believed in the method of chalk and talk, revision exercises, testing and remedial exercises.

Solomon responded to the question from a social as well as a political point of view. She contended that the change was necessary for transformation of education in the country. Her support for the new approach is captured in the following words:

I did see the change as necessary because of the inequalities in our old education system. We needed something new to balance off the wrongs that were done during the apartheid education era.

However, she found the change “a bit difficult” for many reasons. Firstly, she was asked to teach Arts and Culture, whereas she was a History and Geography teacher. Secondly, she was used to the teacher-learner situation and not the facilitator-learner situation as was expected in OBE. As a result of not being trained in OBE, she was not equipped with the necessary skills needed to function in a learner-centred classroom where the learners had a lot more freedom to talk. The problem was that as a result of this new freedom given to learners, many of them became unnecessarily noisy and disruptive. This problem was aggravated by the fact that there were up to fifty learners sitting in a classroom.

Gordon also found the changing to outcomes-based education difficult in the sense that it entailed a whole lot of work. He stated:

I think slight changes are needed. ... It was not easy ... It took a little while getting used to. I think the most difficult moment for me was the assessment. We were used to the old school- give your tests and assignments.

Gordon added that it was not a problem moving to the role of facilitator. However, many learners were not used to the new learner-centred situation and, therefore did not follow guidelines. He too emphasised that the problem was compounded because of the large class sizes of fifty learners. He did concede, however, that more clear instructions needed to be given to learners to keep them purposefully occupied.

Educators thus experienced the change to outcomes-based approach in different ways. For some educators, it was an easy transition. For others, it presented different challenges. This, however, was the easy part. The road ahead had many obstacles.

4.4.3 Obstacles, difficulties and challenges facing educators in implementing outcomes-based education

The participants were asked whether they had experienced any obstacles, difficulties and challenges in implementing outcomes-based education, and how they coped with them. All the participants responded that they had indeed experienced obstacles, difficulties and challenges.

4.4.3.1 Inadequate training, support and direction

All the teachers interviewed stated that the training was inadequate. Soni recalled the four years he spent at college to become an educator in the traditional approach to teaching. He compared this with the five-day training workshop he attended in 1999. He stated that a few Subject Advisors and teachers that were trained by the Department of National Education conducted the training of teachers in OBE. He described the recent training as rushed, confusing, inadequate and conducted by facilitators that did not themselves understand the underlying principles of outcomes-based education. He added that the majority of educators at the workshop shared this view. In view of the great demands made by the new outcomes-based system of education, Soni found this “completely unfair”.

Solomon stated that she was a History and Geography teacher that was requested to teach Arts and Culture, a Learning Area in which she had not received any training. The lack of training made planning, teaching and assessment very difficult. It was only later in that year that she received training offered by teachers who had been trained by the Department of National Education. However, the training she received was in Human and Social Sciences.

Gordon stated that although he attended training workshops conducted by a few Subject Advisors and teachers on two occasions, he still found it inadequate. His first training was in Life Orientation (LO). Because most facilitators were unable to provide clarity on OBE methodology, he had not learnt much from the first workshop, except an understanding of the ideology of OBE. After a few months of piloting OBE (LO) he was requested to teach Technology (TECH). He then attended a second training workshop in TECH that he also found not to be beneficial because of “poor facilitators”. He stated disappointedly:

What was disheartening at the workshop was that we were more experienced than the facilitators themselves. At one stage teachers from Lenarea Secondary and myself actually conducted one or two sessions. So we're saying, we had facilitators that were trying to teach us, yet they didn't know themselves what was going on. The facilitators took all the learning programmes that were

developed away. If that was an indication of how OBE training should be conducted, then we were in big trouble.

Besides the inadequate training, a further obstacle experienced was the lack of support and direction from the Department of National Education. Educators needed, amongst other forms of support, illustrative learning programmes and assistance in assessment. These, however, were not forthcoming. In addition, except in the Natural Sciences, Subject Advisors did not call at school to assist. Educators looked to the Department of National Education for direction concerning, among others, the following issues:

- What are the requirements for continuous assessment?
- What form would the assessment at the end of the GET band take?
- How will educators be expected to assess the achievement of the Specific outcomes and Critical outcomes?

The NDE did not provide feedback regarding the concerns of educators. As a result educators invited officials from the North Durban Region of the Provincial Department of Education to a meeting at the school to address the above concerns. Unfortunately, these officials failed to provide suitable explanations. Soni captures the response of the officials in the following statement:

Every time we met with Department officials, I was present at all these meetings, and I found that the answers given were so elusive and evasive. There was never a direct answer that could actually help us.

Thus, the educators' first encounter with the Department of Education (National and Provincial) indicates that there were deficiencies in the training of most educators. The lack of support that followed aggravated the situation. These were some of the initial obstacles encountered by teachers in the implementation of outcomes-based education at Crystal Point Secondary School.

4.4.3.2 Limited resources

Three of the educators interviewed indicated that the lack of resources was another serious obstacle to the implementation of outcomes-based education. Two of these

teachers cited examples of how the lack of resources made teaching and learning very difficult.

Solomon stated that she found it extremely difficult to teach Arts and Culture because of a lack of resources. For example, there was no clay when the learning program on clay modelling was delivered; there was no tape recorder and no electricity in the classroom (because of faulty electrical sockets) for the learning programme on dances. Learners were not able to demonstrate the outcomes because they were not able to do the practical aspect of the work. Because of these difficulties the lessons eventually ended up as “traditional forms of teaching and learning”.

Gordon stated that although he had lots of resources for Life Orientation, there was a serious problem with Technology. He indicated that the focus on Technology in the school was largely on the aspects of technical drawing and industrial arts. Gordon stated that whilst these aspects are important, it is also important to focus on home economics and computer studies. His difficulty and concern are highlighted in the following statement:

We could not focus on this because of obstacles such as class sizes of fifty. There is a shortage of equipment such as stoves and computers. Learners need to focus on computers. That is what Technology is all about. The way the world is going, learners need to have at least a basic knowledge of computers.

In addressing the issue of insufficient learning materials the educators stated that they had to be creative and innovative in trying to achieve the goals of outcomes-based education. They engaged in the following:

- Collected newspapers and magazines at home and took them to school;
- Used the internet;
- Made photocopies of relevant chapters from textbooks; and
- Visited libraries.

These educators indicated that although the Department of National Education had provided some resources, these were inadequate and often not relevant to the learning programmes being facilitated. As a pilot school, they expected more resources to be provided. Gordon disappointedly remarked:

Being a pilot school, there were little resources for us. It was only after we had almost gone through the year that we found resource materials and textbooks and facilitators' guides became available.

These educators argued that whilst they did not rely solely on textbooks, they found it necessary to “help” and “guide” them in the new outcomes-based approach to teaching.

Raihman, however, responded that the issue of resources was not an obstacle in her classroom. She felt that a complaint of a lack of resources was “not really legitimate”. She argued:

Lots of people were looking for a textbook that they could take into a classroom and deliver a lesson. I believe that, that is not transformational OBE. ... But I personally feel that a lot of people were complaining simply because they were, if I can use the term, too lazy to look beyond the textbook.

Besides using the creative and innovative strategies stated above, it is unusual and very interesting to note that Rahiman also involved her mother, who is at home, in gathering resources from newspapers. She explained:

What I normally tell her is 'Mum, I'm working on this in class or working on that' and somehow when she's reading she picks these things up and cuts them out from the newspaper. Sometimes there may be an article that may not be something I'm working on, but if she finds it of interest, she says 'I think the children need to know about this' and cuts it out and gives it to me. In this way we have gathered quite a bit of resources.

Raihman conceded, however, that it was probably easier for her to find resources because she is involved in facilitating Language, Literacy and Communication, and resources for this learning area may be more readily available.

Soni and Gordon stated that the problem of a lack of resources grew bigger with the increase in the number of learners that participated in the pilot programme.

4.4.3.3 Large class sizes

All the educators interviewed stated that one of the major obstacles in implementing outcomes-based education was the large class sizes. The school was designed to accommodate up to forty learners per classroom. However, the process of rationalisation and redeployment of teachers resulted in class sizes of an average of fifty learners. This resulted in a severe shortage of physical space. The participants described the effects of large class sizes as follows:

- Educators found it extremely difficult to walk in the classroom when the furniture was arranged for group work (Soni and Gordon).
- Learners that sat in the front of the classroom complained that they could not see the chalkboard (Solomon and Soni).
- There were either too large groups, or too many smaller groups (All participants).

In attempting to address the effects of a lack of space, Soni stated that the desks were arranged back into rows as was used in the traditional approach.

The large class sizes also resulted in high noise levels. Discipline in the class suffered because most educators did not possess the skills to manage large class sizes. Raihman, however stated that she coped with the problem of noise by introducing the whistle in the classroom. When the noise level got a little too high she blew the whistle and that was an indication for the learners to calm down.

The educators interviewed stated that OBE trainers emphasised that OBE can be taught in large classes. Educators, however, argue that the practical implementation of OBE was extremely difficult in large classes.

4.4.3.4 Time constraints

Another major obstacle experienced by all the educators interviewed was that the implementation of outcomes-based education demanded a lot of time. Time was

required for meetings at the macro and micro planning levels. At the macro-planning level all educators involved in the pilot programme met at the beginning of a new term as a Grade Team to brainstorm and decide on the phase organiser and programme organiser.

Educators then met in Learning Area Teams, initially on Saturdays and later every Tuesday, to develop learning programmes. The development of learning programmes and searching for resources took up a lot of time and effort. Educators also met regularly to discuss issues such as assessment and reporting. Educators also experienced time constraints in the classroom. The fifty-minute period was often inadequate to complete a lesson. Although a certain amount of time was set aside for specific aspects of the lesson, learners often required more time than was allocated for discussion. This minimised the time available for reporting by group leaders. Hence, there was no time to complete the assessment aspect.

In an attempt to minimise the problem of time and effort involved in the development of learning programmes and learning source materials the school networked with the neighbouring school, Lenarea Secondary, the other pilot school in the district. The first meeting was held at Crystal Point Secondary School and the next at Lenarea Secondary. At these meetings educators discussed and agreed on common phase organisers, and developed learning programmes and learning source materials. They also shared learning programmes and learning source materials that were developed and used by them earlier in the pilot programme.

Soni and Solomon stated that they were also teaching grade 12 classes. This itself demanded a lot of time and effort. They struggled to balance their time and effort in order to do justice to both OBE classes and the grade 12 classes. The heavy workload carried by these teachers demanded long hours of work to be done at home. This greatly affected their family and community lives. For example, Solomon had little time to adequately attend to the needs of her child; and Soni struggled to balance his time with schoolwork, family, and community work, which he referred to as “his civic responsibility”.

4.4.3.5 Assessment: An administrative nightmare

On the issue of assessment, educators stated that OBE policy makers advocated that various forms of assessment be carried out such as peer assessment. This proved to be problematic in the classroom. For example, learners' assessments were often incorrect, and at times demotivated their peers. Parent assessment of learners' work was not even considered because of the lack of capacity among parents.

Educators stated that a further problem experienced in assessment was the tremendous amount of administration and record keeping that was involved in assessment in outcomes-based education. Soni expressed his frustration by stating:

We had to keep files on each learner, files on groups, files on the whole class. This had to be done for all your classes. It became an administrative nightmare.

In attempting to address this problem educators simplified the assessment as far as possible. For example, one method of assessment was used per lesson, either group work, self-assessment or peer assessment.

4.4.3.6 Lack of parental involvement

Three of the teachers interviewed stated that another obstacle was that a large percentage of parents did not actively involve themselves in the learning of their children. These teachers believed that parents should share the responsibility of the education of their children with the school. The teachers explained that a few parents did initially participate in the macro-planning sessions. However, with time their involvement "fizzled out". The educators conceded that this happened probably because the planning meetings were held during the day, when parents are working.

Educators also experienced limited co-operation from many parents when it came to monitoring their children's homework, completion of projects and preparation for tests. Educators believed that this might be attributed to the poor socio-economic circumstances where both parents work from "six to six" and therefore do not have

the time and energy to assist their children at home or to take them to the library. The effect of this was that a “big gap in learning” was created between these learners compared to those who had the assistance from their parents.

In addressing the problem of limited parental involvement, meetings were convened each year for parents and learners involved in the pilot programme. At these meetings the principal and other members of the school management team outlined, amongst other things, the important principles of outcomes-based education, and emphasised the need for co-operation from parents. Letters were also sent regularly to parents informing them about issues such as assessment and encouraging them to be involved in the education of their children. Soni stated that he also made attempts to get parents more involved by writing messages in the learners’ books. Learners had to return with the signature of their parents alongside the written message. He reported that a significant number of parents, as well as learners, became more co-operative as a result of this strategy.

Thus, the obstacles were many. Educators, however, made every effort to cope with these obstacles in order to succeed in the outcomes-based approach.

4.4.4 Revealing the successes and achievements in outcomes-based education

The participants were asked whether there were any successes and achievements that they experienced in implementing outcomes-based education in the classroom. They responded that despite the many obstacles, they experienced some very successful moments in OBE, as well as some moments of moderate success. They were glad to relate a few of these.

One of the successes described by Raihman was that she had witnessed from 1999 to the end of the pilot programme, a great development in the ability of the learners to ask meaningful questions without being arrogant, as though they were undermining an educators’ authority. This, she felt, was a new mindset and that the ability to pose meaningful questions was a crucial skill needed for the development of critical thinkers in the country. She shared that this positive change happened to some of the

“quieter learners, those that normally would accept anything that you tell them”. Whilst it could not be verified that the positive change in learners was due to OBE, Raihman explained that she could not find another reason for such a change in learners.

Raihman stated that the most exciting learning programme in her experience was Travel and Tourism. This programme was developed jointly with Lenarea Secondary. Learners were given a major research project in which they had to research a specific country that they would like to tour. She stated that learners were “quite thrilled about the project because they did not just see this as a phase organiser, or programme organiser, or travel and tourism in isolation. The final product was outstanding”. It did not only indicate good language usage and communication skills, but it also revealed the dreams that these “disadvantaged children” had of the countries that they would like to visit as adults.

Soni recalled that one of the most successful moments for him took place during the delivery of the Culture and Society learning programme. In this programme learners were put into groups, and each group had to role-play a wedding scene. The groups comprised a mixture of males and females, Indians and Blacks as well as learners from different religious denominations. In the wedding scene the Black learners wore Indian traditional clothing like the sari and punjabi. In some groups, the bride was Indian and the groom was Black and vice-versa. The programme was “fascinating”. The programme highlighted cultural diversity amongst learners attending a school that comprised learners from a diverse cultural background. The cultural tolerance and nation building that emanated from this programme makes this one of the most successful moments in the classroom.

Another successful learning programme described by Soni was Water Pollution: Cholera. This topic was discussed at a time when there was an outbreak of cholera in Kwazulu-Natal. Besides discussing the causes and effects, and prevention of cholera, Soni used a picture of a little boy scooping water from a dirty puddle during the floods in Mozambique. Learners were asked the following questions: How do you feel about the child in the picture? Give reasons for your feelings. Do you think that you are more fortunate than the child? Explain why you think so. The responses

received suggested that learners were empathetic. Educators believed that there was a shift in the learners' thinking from passive to critical thinkers.

Solomon recalled one of the successful moments involved the “development” of learners from the Black townships. It had been observed that in the ‘old’ system most of these learners were reticent to speak in the classroom. However, this had changed since the introduction of co-operative group work. Solomon happily described the positive change that OBE had on these learners in the following way:

...but with group work, they sat with the other learners that they were comfortable to work with, with their friends. They communicated well. They were able to talk on various subjects even if they moved a little into their language and then veered back into English.

Another successful learning programme described by Solomon was one on Democracy. In this programme, learners, amongst other things, examined and discussed the Bill of Rights and the different structures of the government. In one of the lessons which focussed on a democratic process, learners simulated a meeting between community leaders and municipal councillors to debate the location of a new shopping centre. In another lesson learners examined the schools' Representative Council of Learners election process as another case study of a democratic process. Responses from group leaders at the end of the lesson suggested that these “young people had become politically aware” and were developing the capacity to “participate actively in promoting a just and democratic society”.

Gordon recalled one of his successful programmes was AIDS. In Life Orientation learners were put into groups and asked to create a massive scrapbook in which they had to paste every article, picture and information that they found on AIDS in that month. During every lesson one or two of the groups came forward and presented their scrapbook. Learners' responses suggested that they were able to work effectively with other members of a team. Gordon described the success of the programme by adding:

Their understanding was remarkable. For them to understand at that level, things that we feel uncomfortable with, like sex education, the causes of AIDS, how to prevent AIDS, and how to treat people with AIDS, was a great success.

In Technology, Gordon gave learners a project where they were to make, either a poster, or a pamphlet that created an awareness of AIDS. The learners were requested to create pamphlets that could go out into the community, bearing in mind that some people cannot read. Learners presented “outstanding” pieces of work in the form of pictures and the use of shapes. One of the pamphlets created was in the form of a condom. Another was in the shape of a man, and when opened out, it showed several people holding hands in the fight against AIDS. Whilst the project created an awareness of AIDS, the excellent technical aspects, such as the shape and design, suggested that learners were developing skills that would equip them for the world of work.

These stories related by educators suggest that they experienced moderate successes in the classroom. These successes might be attributed to a number of factors such as adequate preparation of interesting learning programmes, the availability of certain resources for a certain learning programmes. The fact that the educators recalled these stories with delight suggests that they feel positive about OBE.

4.4.5 Teachers’ experiences of learners’ responses

In response to the question on how they felt the learners’ experienced outcomes-based education, Raihman commented that at the start of the pilot programme in 1999 most learners were excited. This was because she had “hyped them up to a point where they had to be excited”. Despite this excitement, Raihman felt that learners’ initial ability to adapt to the outcomes-based approach, particularly group work, was problematic. They were comfortable with the old approach where they were passive and the teacher was the transmitter of knowledge. Now they had to play an active role and take responsibility for their learning. They reacted in various ways to group work. Some learners were very noisy and when the teacher went up to the group these learners became very quiet and sometimes stopped the discussion. Other learners did not participate, and only started to discuss the work because the teacher was assessing their participation in their group.

The educators stated that whilst learners began to show improvement in group-work over time, some problems began to surface. Learners began to complain that certain members in the group did not contribute to discussions or that they were reluctant to assume the role of leader. Teachers observed that some groups completed their discussion and waited for quite some time to report because the other groups were still involved in discussion. Some learners, and their parents complained that there were learners that were not contributing to group projects and research assignments but were receiving that same assessment that the group was given. This they found was unfair. The educators stated that many learners that were not contributing to the projects because of their poor social circumstances. These learners lived in the informal settlements and, therefore had no access to libraries and the internet. The educators stated that they had to review the nature of the project work and assignments so that all learners could contribute towards the group. This sometimes meant setting less challenging tasks for learners. Gordon stated that he addressed the problem of non-contribution by requesting each group to submit a record of the contribution of each learner in the initial stages of the project. He followed this up during the next lesson, motivating learners who were still not co-operative until all learners made a contribution.

Gordon described the response of some learners as “enthusiastic, willing and excited” because they were doing something new. These learners coped with the change. Whilst certain learners were able to cope, others didn’t because they were used to the traditional approach. It is for this reason that he contends that learners should not have been introduced to the new approach in the middle of their school career. Instead, learners should be exposed to the new approach from Grade R in the primary school and progress to the next grade in the outcomes-based approach.

Soni contended that many learners found it difficult to cope with one of the underlying principles of OBE, i.e. learners must take responsibility for their learning. He suggested that they were used to “being spoon fed” by the teacher in the form of notes and worksheets. They were also used to rote learning and writing tests. According to Soni, it is the kind of education that most of them wanted, and introducing them to the new approach in the middle of the year, and in the middle of their school lives “didn’t seem to go down well with many learners”.

Solomon also stated that learners initially found it difficult to cope with OBE. However, gradually more and more learners became actively involved in classroom discussion. Solomon delightfully remarked on how educators appreciated the involvement of learners in meaningful classroom discussion in the following statement:

When we saw the learners succeed, it made us feel better about it. Initially it was difficult to change from the old to the new approach. Because of the change in the learners' participation, OBE became more acceptable to us; it became a user-friendly OBE approach.

The educators interviewed stated, however, that at the end of 2000, all the uncertainties started when the answers to questions raised earlier in the year were not forthcoming from the DoE. The question regarding the form of the grade 9 examinations was still an unanswered issue. At the beginning of 2001 learners raised concerns regarding the FET band. They wanted clarity about what was expected of them in grade 10, what courses would be available in grade 10, will they write a National or Provincial Examination in Grade 12, and will universities and technikons accept their grade 12 certificates. Learners began questioning the educators who then raised these concerns with the DoE on behalf of the learners. The DoE was unable to provide answers and, therefore “negative vibes” started coming from the learners. They became unhappy with the uncertain future and some learners considered lobbying for support, in the form of a petition, to withdraw from the pilot programme.

4.4.6 “The Bombshell”: The suspension of the pilot programme

In March 2001, at a meeting of principals and co-ordinators of OBE pilot programmes, at the Riverside Conference Centre in Durban, the Provincial Department of Education “dropped a bombshell” by announcing that the pilot programme was being suspended because schools would not be allowed to pilot the FET phase. It was reported that the DoE was considering the pilot programme of the FET to be conducted in a small and under-resourced province.

I asked the participants how they felt about the suspension of the pilot programme. Raihman, who was present at the meeting when the suspension of the pilot programme was announced, angrily retorted how she felt:

I was ballistic. I was very upset. I was angry. I was mad. I wanted to know who could be accountable for this.

Raihman explained the reasons for her reaction. Firstly, learners spent more than two years in the outcomes-based approach and now had to return to the “old” approach. Hence, the DoE needed to account for the fact that the learners have gone on a path that they shouldn’t have gone. Secondly, the DoE had given a guarantee to parents at a meeting that the school will be allowed to pilot the FET phase but had gone back on its word. She thus felt that “we had betrayed our learners”. Thirdly, she stated that whatever the problem was that resulted in the DoE suspending the pilot programme, “if we betray our learners, what signals are we sending to them?” In this regard she stated sadly:

No matter what words one uses to describe it in, how diplomatic and tactful you are about it, the truth of the matter is, we used our learners as guinea pigs.

It was for these reasons that she recommended to the Provincial Curriculum Committee that the matter be referred to the Human Rights Commission. Whilst this did not materialise, the Curriculum Unit of Department of Education: North Durban Regional committed itself to do everything in its power to assist the learners to cope with the implications of the suspension of the pilot programme.

On the other hand, Soni stated that he was “thrilled” about the suspension of the pilot programme. The main reason for this, he said, was that the DoE, even after many meetings and letters, was unable to provide the teachers and learners with concrete information with regards to concerns in terms of the examinations and the FET phase. There were too many unanswered questions and a lack of direction for too long. These were the things that created the most doubt in his mind and uncertainty in the minds of the learners.

Soni recalled that early in 2001, some parents approached teachers, including him, for advice as to whether they should take their children, who were in grade 9, to other schools that were following the traditional approach. He stated that he was placed in an “invidious” position but actually advised them to take their children away. Two months later the DoE suspended the pilot programme. He felt “vindicated”.

Solomon stated that she also felt “relieved” with the suspension of the pilot programme. She explained that the lack of direction made it very difficult to prepare learners for the grade 9 examinations. Furthermore, learners in grade 9 were concerned about the selection of courses. Teachers did not have answers. She felt that when this was “sorted out” then teachers would feel safer carrying learners through the senior phase. It was therefore “good” that the pilot programme was dropped.

Gordon also stated he felt “relieved” and “happy” when the pilot programme was suspended. He explained that his concern was for the learners. The learners were asking questions. They expected their teachers to know all the answers. When the teachers could not provide the answers, learners became “frustrated”. Teachers felt “helpless” and “unhappy” that they could not do much in this situation. Although there were visits from officials of the Provincial Education Department as well as the Department of National Education there was still no direction. He therefore felt “happy” when the pilot programme was suspended.

I was curious to know whether there were any strategies used during the outcomes-based education pilot programme that were currently being used by the participants. They all responded that despite the suspension of the pilot programme, they were still using many OBE strategies.

4.4.7 Useful OBE strategies currently employed

Educators explained that strategies in planning, development of learning programmes, delivery of curriculum in the classroom, and assessment techniques that were adopted during the pilot programme are being used in the implementation of OBE in the grade 7 and 8 levels. The teachers indicated that the pilot programme had provided them with a reasonable amount of experience of an outcomes-based system of education.

It is interesting to note that all the teachers interviewed stated that they are also currently using OBE strategies in their teaching of grades involved in the traditional approach. One of the strategies used by all educators is group work. Raihman stated that she sticks very much to group work in the teaching of literature and comprehension. Soni uses group work in Geography, where learners do their projects in groups. Solomon stated that she uses group work in Guidance and Geography. Gordon stated that he continues to use group work in the teaching of Industrial Arts. Solomon described one of the successes of using group work in the following statement:

Now that they are working in groups, they find it easier because the tasks are split. So they're getting the work done, and it's being done properly as well, because when one doesn't understand, the rest of the group enlightens him.

Another strategy that was used in OBE that is currently used by the teachers interviewed involves planning. The teachers stated that although they used to previously discuss and plan their work with teachers teaching a common grade, this was done very superficially. Since OBE was implemented they have seen the benefits of planning as a team and now plan all the work as a team. This also has the advantage of reducing the workload of teachers.

4.4.8 Lessons learnt from the OBE pilot programme

Educators indicated that the OBE pilot programme was a learning curve. It was, therefore not surprising that all the interviewees indicated that they had learnt many lessons from the pilot programme.

4.4.8.1 The principles of outcomes-based education

Raihman stated that she had learnt that "OBE is a good approach". She explained that she subscribes to the OBE principles that all learners can succeed, and that success breeds success. She warned, however, that she had learnt that OBE is only going to be successful if the teacher-learner ratio is addressed with a view to having smaller classes.

4.4.8.2 The decision-making process

Soni stated that one of the most important lessons that he learnt was not to be too hasty when it comes to making important decisions without having the necessary information at hand. The pilot programme is a “case in point”. The school undertook the project without initially asking important questions. The decision to participate was not taken from an informed point of view; hence there were too many problems.

4.4.8.3 Mindset and level of preparedness of educators

Another lesson learnt, according to Soni, was the importance of preparedness when it comes to teaching in the OBE method. In this regard he warned:

It is so important that you prepare your learning programmes thoroughly, know the information at hand, and have your learning source materials. The learners must be actively involved every minute of the time. Otherwise the OBE class will fail dismally.

4.4.8.4 Parental involvement

Whilst, educators need to be adequately prepared, parents also need to be prepared to be involved to a greater degree in the education of their children. Solomon stated that one of the important lessons learnt was the importance of getting parents involved in outcomes-based education. She remarked:

Parents, in OBE, definitely have to play a greater role. We need to meet or liaise with them as often as possible. I found that lacking in our pilot programme. Hence, many learners were either not working or produced poor quality work.

Solomon suggested that whilst a few parents participated initially, their support “fizzled out”. This she presumed was because meetings were arranged during the day when parents were at work. She advised that greater effort must be made to encourage parental involvement in macro planning and to “educate” parents about OBE.

4.4.8.5 Meeting among all grade educators

Solomon explained that another important lesson that she learnt was that a grade meeting involving all learning areas was important to discuss the contents of learning programmes. This was vital in order to prevent the overlap of work in the various learning areas. Gordon also quoted this as one of the important lessons that he learnt. He explained:

Our integration was successful to a point. However, there was still overlapping in the different learning areas. We need to be guarded against integration or else there will be overkill.

4.4.8.6 Trusting the National Department of Education

Among the many lessons learnt Raihman angrily remarked:

I think, for me, the most important lesson is: Don't trust the Department of National Education.

She felt that the Department of National Education had breached its promise to allow schools to pilot the FET phase, and as far as the curriculum changes were concerned, she would go with her 'gut instinct' in determining how she is going to prepare the learners for the future.

4.4.8.7 Teamwork

Another lesson learnt according to Raihman, was the importance of teamwork in order to make outcomes-based education successful. Solomon and Gordon also cited this as a lesson learnt from the pilot programme. In this regard Raihman remarked:

If we have to succeed in preparing our learners to be the responsible adults that we want them to be in the future, then we have to work as a team, as we have been doing.

The educators had learnt many lessons. Some lessons were learnt from positive experiences, whilst others were learnt through unpleasant experiences. All the educators interviewed stated that despite the problems, and the suspension of the OBE pilot programme, they were richer for the experience.

4.4.9 Concluding comments by educators on the OBE pilot programme

Interestingly, all interviewees were enthusiastic to comment further on their experiences of the outcomes-based education pilot programme. Raihman stated that the OBE pilot programme has been a learning experience that she “will never forget”. She had gained a lot from it, and in spite of it being suspended, she felt “richer for the experience”. She commented that she was glad that I was researching this topic, as it would provide the government and officials of the Department of Education with a “window” as to what transpired at the school. She expressed her disappointment with the Department of National Education in the following statement:

We had visitors from the National Education Department but nobody actually stepped into the classroom to see what was being done. That is a sad indictment. As far as I'm concerned, the National Department of Education was supposed to have been overseeing this whole thing. It makes no sense to me; very little makes sense these days.

Solomon commented that OBE aims at developing the learner holistically. It is therefore important for teachers to either be familiar with a basic knowledge of the other learning areas, or to plan learning programmes for all the learning areas, thoroughly. In this way all the specific outcomes as well as the critical outcomes would be accounted for.

Gordon stated that the experience gained through the pilot programme was ‘beneficial’. He knows what OBE is all about; what he has to achieve; and the steps that are necessary to get there. Thus, the current implementation of OBE in grade 8 “is fine”.

However, he expressed his disappointment with the DoE for using the learners as “guinea pigs”; for implementing a programme not knowing where it was going; and for suggesting an approach knowing that there are shortfalls such as the high teacher-learner ratio and inadequate resources. In this regard he remarked:

What happens in a more disadvantaged school, a Black school? How are they implementing OBE? Yet people at the top think that everything is fine, and everything is going according to plan.

Soni commented that he has “serious misgivings” about the way OBE was being implemented. He stated that in order for it to be successful it should be gradually introduced from grade R onwards; there must be smaller class sizes; teachers should be trained at university to teach in the OBE method; and OBE facilitators should speak from a point of view of experience when training teachers. He concluded positively by stating the following:

I suppose that this method can work but it needs the commitment of the government, teachers, learners and parents.

4.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The experiences’ of educators suggests that before the commencement of the pilot programme there was much excitement. This excitement, however, did not last long because the problems soon began to surface. In hindsight, educators realised that they did not make an informed decision regarding participation in the programme. They attributed this to the manner in which the “offer” of participation came across at a meeting. In the implementation of outcomes-based education they experienced many difficulties as well as successes. However, suspension of the pilot programme came as a great shock. There were many lessons that the educators had learnt.

In the next chapter I will discuss the findings of the study, i.e. the common trends or themes that emerge from the experiences of the educators. These themes will be evaluated in terms of the literature I reviewed on OBE. The chapter will also include some recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines common trends and themes emerging from the experiences of educators in an OBE pilot programme. These trends are analysed and discussed in relation to literature on the practice as well as management of outcomes-based education in the classroom. This chapter also provides recommendations for the implementation of outcomes-based education based on the findings reported. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study.

5.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.2.1 The decision-making process to participate in the pilot programme was flawed at many levels

The Department of National Education's (via the Provincial Education Department) offer for the school to participate in the OBE pilot project without providing all the necessary details for participants to make an informed decision appeared to be unfair. Whilst the decision to participate was voluntary, it was imperative for the DoE to provide the school with the necessary details to make an informed decision, for example the aims of the pilot, the process by which it would be managed (management plan), and the amount of resources, training and support that could be expected. In addition, DoE could have provided feedback on the Grade 1 pilot project that was conducted earlier. The report titled *National Evaluation and Monitoring of the Trial of Curriculum 2005 and OBE in Provincial Pilot Schools in South Africa* is dated 7 November 1997, suggesting that it had been available in 1999 when the offer was made to the school to pilot OBE in the Senior Phase. This report contained information, inter-alia, on the difficulties and successes of the Grade 1 pilot, which might have served as valuable information during the decision-making process, and even during the implementation of the Senior Phase pilot programme.

At the institutional (school) level, the decision to participate was also not informed. Although the decision to participate was voluntary, the principal largely influenced the decision. According to Law and Glover (2000: 46), processes of decision-making seems to be problematic for many managers – particularly when they are new to the post. This view might hold true in this instance since educators were encouraged, by the principal who was new at the school, to participate in the programme because it seemingly was an honour and a privilege to be part of the process of curriculum transformation in South Africa. In my view this reason is not sufficient for making a decision to trial a new approach to teaching and learning in a school. Therefore, with hindsight educators felt that they should have been more informed, for example, as to what resources and support could be expected from the DoE. Resources promised to the school by the DoE were not available during the pilot programme. During the implementation of the pilot programme the textbook for grade 7 only arrived the following year. Educators also needed to know the amount of time and effort that would be involved in implementing OBE.

The deployment of teachers into the different Learning Areas by the school management team was also not well thought through. The study reveals that one educator was teaching a Learning Area without any training; whilst another was teaching a Learning Area other than the one he had been trained to teach. It is understandable that the deployment of staff is quite a complex process that involves considering, among others, the needs of the school and the personnel available. However, in my view, deploying an educator to teach a Learning Area without any training is unfair, not only to the educator, but also to learners.

5.2.2 The DNE was not fully prepared to implement the pilot programme

The decision to trial OBE before the implementation in the senior phase by the DoE is commendable since it was the intention of the DoE, among others, to test the practical implementation of the new curriculum policy. However, during the implementation, it became apparent that the DoE was not fully prepared for the trial. The lack of

preparedness of the DoE to implement the pilot programme is borne out of the fact that:

1. The three to five-day re-training workshops for educators in the pilot schools were inadequate, and problematic because of poor quality facilitation by a few Subject Advisors and teachers.
2. The learning source materials were provided very late, were inadequate and often not relevant to the learning programmes undertaken.
3. There were no support structures in place for the pilot schools.
4. There were no structures to monitor the pilot project.
5. Inadequate research was done into resources available to pilot schools.

These shortcomings in the management of the pilot programme by the DoE as well as the Provincial Education Department created difficulties for educators to implement OBE at school level.

According to Potenza and Monyokolo (1999: 231), the real test of the success of OBE depends on how effectively it can be implemented. These researchers contend that a critical factor in successfully translating Curriculum 2005 into practice is to ensure that the three pillars of curriculum transformation are in place and in alignment. These are:

- curriculum development, including illustrative learning programmes;
- learning materials (based on the illustrative learning programmes) and;
- teacher training that would assist teachers to translate all of the above into practice.

The implementation of the OBE pilot programme indicates that the key aspects of curriculum were neither in place nor in alignment. Hence, educators experienced many difficulties in the pilot programme.

Over and above this, the lack of preparedness of the DoE is manifested in the fact that it did not take cognisance of the recommendations of the Grade 1 pilot project. For example, adequate training was required and resources had to be delivered timeously.

Despite these concerns not being addressed, the senior phase pilot project was advocated. It is not surprising; therefore that the difficulties encountered by the Senior Phase pilot were typical of those which surfaced in the Grade 1 pilot.

The lack of preparedness, inadequate support and little monitoring and evaluation leads one to question the reasons for the pilot programme. The intention of the DoE was to test the practical implementation of policy; and the suitability of the learning source materials and illustrative learning programmes is also questionable. Educators in the study indicated, however, that they did not receive learning programmes. The learning source materials arrived after the grade 7 pilot programme was completed. These same problems were also experienced during the grade 8 pilot programme. There was little monitoring and review during the implementation of the programme. Educators in the study indicated that not a single member of the DoE (or Provincial Department of Education) “stepped into the classrooms” to see what was going on. This suggests that the DoE did not adequately meet its responsibilities in managing the implementation of the pilot programme. This, in my view was unfair to the educators as well as learners participating in the programme. The monitoring of the programme “on the ground” was crucial to ascertain, among others, whether educators were practising OBE as it should be and to provide support and guidance that educators so desperately needed. In addition, the shortcomings could have been addressed by the DoE before the implementation of OBE in grade 7 and in grade 8.

5.2.3 The decision-making process regarding the suspension of the pilot programme was flawed

Educators believe that the suspension of the pilot-programme was unilaterally taken by the DoE since it (the DoE) had decided that not all schools involved in the Senior Phase pilot programme would be involved in the pilot of the FET band. However, telephonic communication (August 24, 2001) with Mr. A.H. Bhayat of the North Durban Region Curriculum Division, revealed that the decision to suspend the pilot programme was taken by the Provincial Education Department after consultation with the pilot schools. Mr. Bhayet stated that the decision was taken out of concern for the learners after the DoE failed to give a guarantee that the FET would be in place at the

end of 2001. The concern for the learners by the Provincial Education Department is legitimate because it was understood and naturally assumed that learners involved in the senior phase GET pilot project would continue into the FET band. However, in my view, the Provincial Education Department before the implementation of the pilot programme should have addressed these concerns. Clarity about the continuation of the pilot programme from the Senior Phase to the FET band was crucial because educators and learners were embarking on a programme and needed to know their destination. In addition, clarity about the destination might have influenced their decision to participate or not to participate in the programme.

The issue of consultation between the Provincial Education Department and the pilot schools regarding suspension is unclear and needs to be clarified. The Provincial Education Department, on the one hand, claims to have consulted the pilot schools regarding the suspension of the pilot programme. Educators in the pilot school in this study, on the other hand, explained that they liaised with the Provincial Education Department (and DoE) regarding concerns such as the form of the National Examination at the end of the GET band and the form of the FET band. This does not indicate that there was consultation regarding suspension. Furthermore, educators' description of the announcement of the suspension of the pilot programme as a "bombshell" suggests that it came as a complete surprise to them. However, this does not suggest that the decision by the Provincial Education Department to abort the programme was incorrect.

5.2.4 There is general support for OBE among educators

There is support for OBE among educators interviewed in this study, including those that initially resisted the approach. The support for OBE is manifested in the belief among educators that "OBE is good" and that "it can work". In addition, the support for OBE was to such an extent that some of the goals of OBE such as equipping learners with skills, knowledge, values and attitudes were included in the vision and mission statement of the school.

The support for OBE among some educators can be attributed to their involvement in teacher union structures that afforded them the opportunity to interact with education draft documents. In addition teachers explained that change has to do with “individual attitude” and being “open-minded”. These educators’ explained, therefore they looked at change in a “more positive way”.

The change embraced by educators allowed them to make some progress in OBE. Educators were beginning to succeed in all learning areas as their learners were achieving the desired outcomes during classroom lessons. They attribute their success to the experience that they gained in the OBE pilot programme, proper planning, the adjustment of learners to the OBE, and networking with the neighbouring school.

The support for OBE strategies such as group work is manifested in the educators’ enthusiasm to adopt group work regularly at all grade levels.

5.2.5 Educators experienced difficulties implementing OBE irrespective of years of teaching experience

Whilst educators’ experienced successes during some of the learning programmes, they were faced with many obstacles during most of the pilot programme. The study reveals that educators teaching for 10 years and longer experienced the same difficulties in implementing OBE as those with less than 8 years of teaching experience. The difficulties were attributed to inadequate training, lack of support, inadequate resources, large class sizes and the lack of parental support.

5.2.6 Teachers felt that their preparation for the implementation of OBE was inadequate

The in-service training of teachers in OBE during the pilot programme proved to be inadequate. Educators complained that the three to five day training had many shortcomings. It was too short in duration. Jansen’s (1999: 208) study of Grade 1

teachers implementing OBE in 1998 also found that teachers felt that the training was inadequate and incomplete. This problem was also found during the grade 1 pilot programme (National Evaluation and Monitoring of the Trial of Curriculum 2005 and OBE in Provincial Pilot Schools in SA, 1997: 16 & 17) and has also been cited by the Review Committee (Review Committee Report, 2000: 4).

Another problem stated by educators was that a few facilitators lacked the necessary expertise to empower teachers in OBE. In one instance the teacher stated that he conducted the training because the facilitators “didn’t know what was going on”. During the training teachers developed learning programmes that they felt could be useful when they returned to school. The facilitators took these learning programmes away.

Le Grange (2000: 25) describes the training by the DoE as “hit and run five day workshops” that hold little promise of contributing to transformation in South African classrooms. The problem of “poor training” has been attributed to the cascade model of training that proved inadequate. Hence, this problem is being addressed by the DoE in the short term by the selection and training of a special cadre of national, provincial and district trainers working collaboratively with NGO’s and higher education institutions (Decisions of the CEM on Recommendations of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 2000: 2-3).

Besides the shortcomings in training, support from the DNE during the implementation of the OBE pilot programme was expected by educators, but not available. The DNE was supposed to oversee the programme, but did not adequately do so. Educators’ liaised with the North Durban Region Curriculum Unit but it was unable to provide teachers with support concerning the implementation of OBE. Subject Advisors, generally, have not availed themselves to guide educators. Educators’ requested guidance and direction from the North Durban Region (NDR) Curriculum Division in respect of preparing learners for the final examination in the GET band. The NDR in turn asked the DoE for guidance and direction for the pilot school. There were no answers; hence educators had little direction as to how they should teach.

5.2.7 The severe lack of resources made teaching OBE very difficult

Although the aim of the pilot programme was to evaluate learning source materials (LSMs), these arrived very late. For example, the LSMs for the grade 7 pilot project in 1999 only arrived in May 2000. Educators required textbooks to guide their work in the absence of illustrative learning programmes. These were only available when the school purchased a limited quantity that proved inadequate for the large class sizes, and problematic for integration of the different learning areas in a learning programme. Educators found it difficult to teach subjects such as Arts and Culture and Technology because of the lack of resources. Reeves (1999: 271) also found that a lack of resources and equipment were a significant constraint in the teaching of Natural Science to grade 7 learners in 10 Western Cape schools. The lack of resources impacts negatively on the learning process, especially when the approach to teaching adopts learner-centred methodologies (Reeves, 1999: 52). The lack of resources is also highlighted in the report on National Evaluation and Monitoring of the Trial of Curriculum 2005 and OBE in Provincial Pilot Schools in SA (1997: 16) and the Report of the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee (2000: 7). A question that requires answering is that if the school resources were in short supply during the pilot, what resources can the school expect from the DoE under normal circumstances should OBE be implemented in all grades in all schools nationally?

Potenza and Monyokolo (1999: 243) state that learning materials are a critical part of curriculum implementation and should not be seen as an optional extra. They contend that the argument that teachers should make a shift from an over-reliance on textbooks, and start using other resources makes sense as a long-term strategy. In the context of under-resourced schools it is not surprising that teachers rely heavily on the textbook, and Potenza and Monyokolo (1999: 243) therefore contend that every learner should receive a textbook for each learning programme under study. I believe that whilst textbooks are useful, it is not necessary for every learner to receive a textbook since the type of curriculum (and choice of learning programmes) will vary from one context to the other. Instead, educators could use relevant information contained in textbooks to prepare LSM's for the learning programme that is being undertaken.

5.2.8 Teachers found it extremely difficult to implement OBE with large class sizes

The lack of training in skills required to manage large classes impeded the implementation of OBE in various ways. Firstly, there was a lack of physical space in classrooms. Teachers found that they could not walk around the classroom. Learners sat in the front of the classroom complained that they could not see the chalkboard. Many educators responded to this problem by re-arranging the furniture back into rows used in the traditional approach. This arrangement does not promote co-operative group work that is emphasised in OBE.

Secondly, large classes resulted in high noise levels. The problem of noise is also cited by the National Evaluation and Monitoring of the Trial of Curriculum 2005 and OBE in Provincial Pilot Schools in SA (1997: 16); and the study of the implementation of OBE in Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal (Jansen, 1999: 203).

Teachers also indicated that they also used different strategies to cope with the high noise levels. For example, one teacher was creative and introduced blowing a whistle to remind learners that the noise level was too high.

The large class sizes resulted in a shortage of resources and equipment. At times, the lack of resources influenced the nature of the curriculum. For example, Computer Studies was not being done in Technology because of the limited number of computers. The large class sizes and the consequent lack of physical space is often a major constraint on the effective use of resources (Reeves, 1999: 51).

The large class sizes and a shortage of resources placed constraints on learner-centred methodologies and resulted in teachers re-arranging the furniture back “into rows as was used in the traditional approach”. This has serious implications because educators in such a context are likely to revert to traditional teaching practices. Glatthorn (1993 cited in Le Grange, 2000: 23) has warned that one of the pitfalls of OBE is falling back on behavioural outcomes. In a South African context this may be of serious concern because of the limited resources, and the fact that historically teachers have

been systematically deskilled and have operated in an education milieu entrenched by behaviourist teaching practices (Le Grange, 2000: 23).

5.2.9 Time constraints impeded the implementation of OBE

Educators found that although the duration of a lesson was fifty minutes, the time was inadequate to complete tasks such as assessment. This problem arose because learners were often unable to complete discussions in the allocated time. Educators also found that because the class sizes were large, it was difficult to provide support to every learner in the classroom. This is a serious shortcoming and is contrary to the principles of OBE because in order to be successful in OBE, each student [learner] must be provided time and assistance to realise his or her potential (Boschee & Baron, 1994: 193).

Educators also experienced difficulty in finding time for planning and developing learning programmes. They initially worked on Saturdays and later on Tuesdays. They often took a lot of work home. In addition some of them were teaching grade 12 classes and had to take a lot of work home. It was not only time consuming but also demanded a lot of effort. The heavy workload affected their family lives. Educators had little time to spend to attend to the needs of their children. In support of the teachers' views, Schwarz and Cavener (1994) also indicate that OBE demands much time and energy from teachers, an issue that is underestimated by the advocates of OBE.

5.2.10 Educators expected greater support from parents

Parents too consented to the pilot programme not knowing the demands that it would place on them. For example, parents were required to attend meetings and assist their children at home. Parents committed themselves to the pilot programme in the decision-making stage regarding participation in the pilot. During the course of the pilot only a few parents availed themselves for the macro-planning sessions but their involvement gradually "fizzled" out. They began to absent themselves from planning meetings. The educators interviewed did concede that these meetings were held

during hours when parents were generally at work and could have been the reason for a lack of involvement.

Educators also complained that many parents did not assist their children at home. This created problems for educators as far as the quality and production of the learners' work was concerned. This problem of a lack of parental involvement in the work of their children could be attributed to two things. Firstly, the poor socio-economic conditions in the community- parents worked from "six to six". As a result they had little time and energy to devote to the education of their children. Secondly, many parents in this community do not have the capacity to assist their children in an outcomes-based approach to education because they are not familiar with OBE. In addition, there are many parents that are either illiterate, or possess a low level of education, or have a preference for the traditional system of schooling.

5.2.11 Social conditions influence the degree of success

Although there is a general belief amongst advocates of OBE "that schools control the conditions of success" (Spady & Marshall, 1991: 67), it is evident that there are factors beyond the school that also influence the degree of success in OBE. The educators interviewed stated that the lack of resources such as textbooks, insufficient equipment such as tape recorders, stoves and computers, and the lack of electricity in classrooms due to the lack of funds to repair damaged electrical wiring impacts negatively on the learning process. In addition, many learners live under poor socio-economic conditions and have no access to libraries and the Internet. Scharwz and Cavener (1994: 330), therefore argue that schools are part of larger social systems- a fact denied by OBE, which insists that schools and teachers control the conditions for success. It is therefore important to accept that larger social and economic issues impact on public education.

5.2.12 Educators believe that the implementation of OBE should begin at the grade R level and phased in gradually

Educators found that learners experienced difficulty in adjusting to the new system of a learner- centred classroom. Whilst some learners were making progress in group-work, other learners were unable to cope with taking greater responsibility for their learning. For example, they did not contribute to discussions, were unable to engage in peer assessment, and often did not produce any work, or produced work of a poor quality. This might be attributed to learners having a preference for “teacher- prepared worksheets, notes, and tests” which they were so accustomed to, in the traditional approach. It was thus very difficult for such learners to change to learner-centred methodologies. This difficulty of learners to adjust to learner-centred methodologies was also found by Cavener (Schwarz and Cavener, 1994: 324) when she implemented OBE in a high school in Oklahoma. She found, among other problems, that students did not respond as hoped and that assessments proved disappointing. Hence, problems of this nature led some educators who participated in the study to believe that learners should not have been introduced to OBE in the middle of their school careers.

The concerns of the educators are legitimate in the sense that learners have been accustomed to traditional teaching for approximately seven to eight years and would naturally find it difficult to change. In addition, a poor resource context with an emphasis on learner-centred methodologies is unlikely to bring success. Hence, educators believed that the implementation of OBE should begin in grade R with the provision of adequate resources for this grade. It should then be phased in gradually in the other grades.

The difficulty that learners had in adjusting to learner-centred methodologies highlights the issue of the role of the teacher in the classroom. In OBE, the role of the teacher is de-emphasised and redefined as “a facilitator of the learning process in the learner” (Van Der Horst, 1997: 231; Department of Education, 1997a: 28). Pendlebury (1998 cited in Le Grange, 2001: 10), however, points out that loose interpretations of learner-centred education and the teacher as facilitator ignores or undermines the pedagogical authority of the teacher- without which educative ends

cannot be achieved. Shalem (1999, cited in Le Grange, 2001: 10) argues that a good teacher conducts some kind of epistemological labour in order to bring learners into a working relationship with the traditions and practices that inform the curriculum. She points out that it is the teacher who signifies the entry point, listens attentively to learners for points of resolution to signify the end of the pedagogical episode. This view is significant, because it suggests that shifts to more learner-centred pedagogies do not imply that the pedagogical authority of the teacher ceases to exist. On the contrary, teachers are key agents for enabling transformed practices (Le Grange, 2001: 10).

5.2.13 The suspension of the pilot programme produced mixed feelings

This study indicates that all educators interviewed were concerned about the lack of direction and preparedness of learners for the grade 9 examinations and the subsequent FET band. Educators reacted in different ways to the suspension of the pilot programme. Some educators were extremely disappointed about the suspension of the OBE pilot programme. One of the reasons for this was that learners had spent two years in an OBE system and had to return to the traditional system. This practice is contrary to the process of the phasing in of OBE.

On the other hand, some other educators were happy and relieved that the pilot was suspended. This was because the lack of direction in respect of preparing learners for the national examination and the uncertainties regarding the FET band prevailed for too long. With the suspension educators knew in what direction to train learners.

5.2.14 The shift from policy into practice is not a simple process

This study indicates that whilst educators are prepared to embrace change, the shift from policy into practice is not easy. Whilst there is strong support for OBE among some educators, there are educators like Soni that resist the approach. This is because he found it difficult to change to OBE after spending fifteen years teaching in the traditional approach; and he was not adequately trained in OBE. In addition, he

received very little support and resources. He, therefore still believed in the method of “chalk and talk, revision exercises, testing and remedial exercises”. Thus, the inadequate training and lack of support may impede attempts to change mindsets so that classroom practices are improved. This study also found that educators who supported OBE found it difficult to implement policy because of obstacles such as large class sizes and the lack of resources, a lack of parental support and involvement.

The difficulties experienced by educators suggest that contextual realities were not taken into account when curriculum policy was developed. A decision to follow an OBE model was centrally decided by the DoE. This type of curriculum development process is consistent with the approach to policy development referred to as the Research, Development, Dissemination, Adoption (RDDA) model. All curriculum framework documents were centrally developed with very little input from provinces other than rubber-stamping. The policy documents were then disseminated to schools for adoption. In addition, the time frames were inflexible allowing little opportunity for meaningful participation (Le Grange & Reddy, 1997: 14-15). Grass-roots teachers were excluded from the process of curriculum development. Teachers and provincial representatives were a small elite group (Jansen 1997 cited in Le Grange, 1977: 15) and functioned mainly to inform their constituencies concerning decisions already taken at national level (Le Grange & Reddy, 1997: 15).

According to Le Grange (2001: 4) policies conceived in the RDDA model hold little promise in changing educational practices at schools. One of the reasons is that change greatly depends on local capacity and will (McLaughlin, 1998 cited in Le Grange, 2001: 4). Research on OBE implementation in South Africa supports what McLaughlin asserts. Le Grange and Reddy (2000: 23) report that teacher retrenchments and low teacher morale in the Western Cape resulted in teachers being negatively disposed to the Western Cape Education Department, which militated against their attempts as university-based researchers to introduce teachers to OBE. Le Grange (2001: 5) contends that there might be many other examples of how local capacity and will might militate against policy implementation. McLaughlin (1998 cited in Le Grange 2001: 5) also points out that even though teachers at a particular site may be eager to embrace change, they might opt not to do so, because their institutional setting is not supportive. A second reason that McLaughlin (1998 cited in

Le Grange, 2001: 5) identifies as to why policy cannot mandate what matters is that local variability is the rule; uniformity the exception. She points out that her research in the USA showed that even though schools may have the same common features such as grade structures, syllabi, student placement policies, they also differed in fundamental consequential ways. This view holds true in South Africa as we move from one province to another, from the urban school to the rural school, or even from classroom to classroom in the same school. Hence, policies that do not take into consideration the realities of classroom practice may militate against the very intentions of the policies to bring about change (Le Grange & Reddy: 2000, 24-25).

5.2.15 Educators learnt valuable lessons from the pilot

Despite the shortcomings and difficulties experienced in the pilot programme, educators felt that their involvement had enriched them professionally. It had provided them with experience that proved useful in implementing OBE. In addition, they had learnt the following lessons:

1. They must be more involved in decision-making in matters that concern them.
2. They must involve parents to a greater degree.
3. Teamwork is crucial for success.
4. Educator preparedness is paramount to success in OBE.
5. Grade meetings are crucial to ensuring integration of all learning areas.

The findings of this study thus reveal that irrespective of the numbers of years of teaching experience, educators faced many difficulties in the implementation of OBE in the pilot programme. The lack of resources, inadequate training of teachers, large class sizes, lack of parental involvement, conditions of poverty were some of the problems that impeded the success of OBE. The findings thus indicate that the translation of policy into practice is not an easy process. This illuminates the importance of taking contextual realities into account in decision-making regarding curriculum reform and implementation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Since OBE as a curriculum approach is likely to remain with us for a long time, the following recommendations are made in view of the data collected in this study and the literature reviewed:

5.3.1 Training and support

The difficulty of implementing OBE can be attributed to the insufficient training received by educators. This problem could be rectified in several ways. One way of addressing the insufficient training is for the DoE to intensify its capacity building workshops for educators. This could be undertaken in the form of comprehensive in-service and on-going training that includes, among others, courses on the development of learning programmes, innovative teaching methodologies in large classes and assessment strategies.

It is also recommended that the sub-structures of the DoE involve itself to a greater extent in the provision of training and support to teachers. For example, District OBE Superintendents and Regional Subject Advisors could visit schools and provide encouragement, guidance and support to educators. They could also conduct an OBE needs survey and develop intervention strategies to address any need/s as early as possible. It should be noted that on-going support and affirmation of teachers is crucial for a lasting and sustainable change.

Whilst the local District Office of the DoE is involved in facilitating training programmes, the training and support given to all grade 1 educators in the Benoni/Brakpan district by the District Teaching and Learning Unit offers some strategies that may be useful. In a training course designed collaboratively by Teaching and Learning Facilitators with Foundation Phase expertise, and a curriculum specialist, educators were trained for three hours once a week for a four-week period. The training involved, inter-alia, the planning of lessons using the new policy, outcomes-based assessment, and classroom and school management. After the

intensive workshop-based training, cluster committees were set up to provide ongoing support to teachers. Information and support was provided to the chairperson of each cluster committee who in turn passed the information on to the rest of the members of the cluster. In addition, school and class visits became an important part of the ongoing support provided by the Foundation Phase team in the District.

Parental participation in planning initiatives as well as the supervision of learners' could be improved. The DoE in partnership with the school could also introduce capacity building workshops for parents. Such workshops should be scheduled during the days and hours when parents are generally available. The programme might include aspects such as the underlying principles of OBE, the role of parents in planning at a macro-level and assessment. This collaboration has the potential of improving learning as well as reducing discipline-related problems.

5.3.2 Professional development

It is important to note that the school should not rely solely on the DoE for training. The school management team should create continuous professional development opportunities for teachers. Documents and the latest books related to OBE could be discussed critically at these sessions.

In addition, schools could network with institutions of higher learning for teachers or put the other way around, universities should involve themselves actively in the transformation of classroom practices. For example, in a participatory research project university-based researchers introduced teachers in a localised community in the Western Cape to OBE and environmental education. These researchers facilitated a series of workshops during which the participating teachers developed learning programmes related to local issues. Hence, school-university partnerships, where they are possible, hold the promise of contributing to transforming practices in schools if such partnerships can be sustained.

It is possible that educators are relying too heavily on the DoE for training in OBE and are not pursuing further tertiary education that could prove advantageous in the classroom. This could be attributed to limited study leave available to teachers as well

as the withdrawal of the salary re-grading system. It is, therefore recommended that a reasonable period of study leave be granted to educators, and the system of salary re-grading for educators pursuing degrees in Education be re-introduced. This will encourage studying further, and upgrading their knowledge in the latest trends in education that could be useful to improve classroom practice.

5.3.3 Community involvement

The lack of community involvement during the pilot programme is conspicuous. Greater effort needs to be made to get the communities involved in planning initiatives of this kind. This has the advantage of determining needs and then developing a relevant curriculum that can respond to the needs. In addition, the community can be tapped for their resources and expertise. Parents and grandparents could play an active role in an OBE classroom. They could serve as teacher aids in a more formal relationship, as storytellers, language assistants in multilingual classrooms and itinerant visitors (e.g. talking about their careers and jobs). In more informal relationships OBE gets the learners out of the classroom and into places of work as well as the homes of community members. These OBE methodologies are common in the USA. Such possibilities should be explored in South Africa.

5.3.4 Future policy initiatives

There are four alternative conceptions of curriculum policy: curriculum policy as guidelines for practice, policy as treatment specification, policy as disposition and policy as that which occurs.

Curriculum policy as guidelines for practice is centrally developed and often provided in written form. It includes guidelines for practice that relate more directly to curriculum. Curriculum 2005 is an example of this type of policy. It is consistent with the RDDA model which is basically a top-down approach to curriculum reform and that does not recognise the complexity of classroom settings and change processes.

Policy as treatment specification involves introducing pre-specified goals and action plans, which are rigorously evaluated by quantitative instruments to see to which extent the treatments, were implemented. A key criticism of this view of policy is that pre-specifying an entire course of action assumes that the policy maker has a thorough knowledge of the conditions of implementation. In reality, this is unlikely since participants in the implementation situations will invariably know their needs better than an outsider. Hence, some elements of the RDDA model are also evident here

In curriculum policy as disposition, policy makers do not take on the role of expert authorities. Instead, they function to establish a sense of direction in dialogue with those who live in the situation where policy is applied. Those who live in the situation where policy is applied become co-workers in determining the direction policy should take. In this instance, policy becomes an ever evolving, continuous process in which it is revisited and refined. Policy making in this instance is a more democratic process than the first two approaches. A criticism levelled against this approach to policy is that educators or community members are not always capable of engaging in dialogue about educational issues. This problem could be eliminated if those with specialised knowledge advise them as to what is educationally worthwhile (Le Grange, 2001: 8).

Policy as that which occurs holds the view that curriculum policy is a much less systematic and more thoroughly a political and social activity. Rather than viewing policy as planned guidelines or treatment specifications, policy is seen as a contextualised process. What actually occurs in practice is what needs to be studied. This view of policy recognises the realities of schools and classrooms as the starting point for policy deliberation. A criticism against this view of policy is that if one focuses only what occurs a major part of the function of policy is severed, namely the *ought*. However, there might be merit in exploring this perspective on policy further, so that it might be possible to blur the boundaries between policy and pedagogy, leading to the transformation of pedagogical practices (Le Grange, 2001: 8).

The current curriculum policy initiatives in South Africa have been dominated by a top-down approach that cannot on its own bring about changed practices at the micro-level. The involvement of teachers in curriculum reform is paramount since they are the implementers of the curriculum. Their involvement is crucial to achieving success.

This does not suggest that top-down approaches are not necessary. The transformation of education requires a combination of the top-down as well as bottom-up approaches discussed above (Le Grange, 2001: 10).

Since current policy studies neglect a focus of what actually happens in practice, there is a need in South Africa to illuminate practice so that it can inform policy (Le Grange, 2001: 11). It is therefore recommended that future policy development initiatives should be informed by school-based research. This approach to policy development offers a micro-level perspective of what transpires in schools and could lead to a better understanding of curriculum issues. In addition, in evaluating curriculum change policies, it might be beneficial to establish whether what teachers' say they do is consistent with what actually happens in the classroom.

5.3.5 Time-constraints

The study reveals that the fifty-minute period is insufficient for educators to complete all the necessary tasks in one lesson. Educators need to carefully plan their lessons taking into account the approximate duration of every activity in the allocated lesson time. In addition, special strategies should be developed by the school management team to allow for extra time for the completion of lessons/ learning programmes instead of suggesting that teachers stick rigidly to fifty-minute periods. This could take the form of five one-hour periods in a cycle of eight days or increasing the hours of contact time with learners (a longer school day). In addition, time could be saved if learners are based in a classroom for all lessons instead of moving from class to class for the different learning areas.

5.3.6 Teacher / learner ratio

The high teacher/learner ratio (large class sizes) needs to be lowered to allow teachers enough time to provide attention and support to every learner. Until the teacher-learner ratio is addressed, educators will need to devise ways to employ co-operative learning strategies and peer teaching and assessment to meet the challenge of OBE in

large classes. Educators could increase the use of self-monitoring, self- assessment and the amount of independent work by learners.

Korea and Singapore, despite large class sizes achieve top ratings in science and maths on international rating scales. It is recommended that the successful strategies adopted in Korea and Singapore be explored and possibly adopted in South Africa.

5.3.7 Networking with surrounding schools

Networking with the neighbouring school not only reduced the workload of some teachers, but also led to the design and delivery of a very successful learning programme on Travel and Tourism. The school should therefore re-establish a partnership with the neighbouring school and develop partnerships with other schools in circuit/district. A meeting could be held at least once a month with the neighbouring schools. At this meeting learning area teams might discuss and share, inter-alia, learning programmes and ideas. It is important that such partnerships be sustained and that they not “fizzle- out” as did the pilot programme. The managers of schools should be actively involved in building, monitoring and maintaining partnerships.

It is my view that if due consideration is given to the above recommendations; they will possibly eliminate some of the obstacles facing curriculum reform and the implementation of the new curriculum. This could lead to success in the implementation of OBE.

5.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The findings suggest that there were problems in the early decision-making stages concerning participation in the pilot programme. Educators felt, with hindsight, that they did not make an informed decision. In the implementation of the pilot programme the educators experienced limited success. They were faced with many obstacles and challenges that impeded the implementation of OBE. The inadequate training and lack of support, an under-resourced context, and poor social conditions

were some of the problems that impeded the successful implementation of OBE. Most of the teachers, therefore felt “relieved” when the pilot programme was aborted. The findings thus suggest that the shift from policy into practice is not easy. The shortcomings of the pilot programme are issues that should be addressed since OBE is likely to remain with us for a long time. The importance of building capacity and a greater commitment from teachers and parents cannot be overemphasised. The success of OBE cannot be achieved by the DoE on its own. It is therefore necessary for all roleplayers (educational leaders, teachers, parents, learners and the community) to commit themselves to making a meaningful contribution towards the successful implementation of OBE. In addition, the DoE needs to address critical problems such as large class sizes and the lack of resources such as learning source materials. Furthermore, this study strongly emphasises the importance of considering contextual realities in future curriculum policy initiatives.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This case study is an in-depth revelation of the experiences of educators of an OBE pilot programme. The educators volunteered to participate in this new approach on the assumption that they could expect much training and support from the DNE. In reality, they received training in the form of a three to five day workshop, facilitated by trainers that were themselves struggling to come to grips with OBE; and a training manual to implement OBE. The in-service training thus proved to be inadequate.

During the pilot programme educators encountered many obstacles such as the lack of illustrative learning programmes and assessment. Educators looked to the DoE for guidance in this regard, as well as on matters concerning the grade 9 examinations and the implementation of the FET band. The direction and support that they looked for was not forthcoming. Instead, a unilateral decision was taken by the Provincial Education Department to abort the OBE pilot programme. There was no review of the pilot programme after it had been suspended in March 2001. Although they were enriched by the experience, in retrospect, educators felt remorseful that they had not been fully involved in decision-making regarding participation in the OBE pilot programme.

The difficulties encountered by educators and the suspension of the pilot programme suggests that the OBE pilot project did not go according to plan, if there was a plan! The implementation of the OBE in the senior phase began six months later. There was no time for review when the implementation began.

This study thus indicates that the translation of curriculum policy into practice is not a simple process. The difficulties encountered by teachers such as inadequate training, the large class sizes, the lack of resources and poor parental participation suggest that contextual realities cannot be overlooked in a process of curriculum reform. Furthermore, the shift from policy into practice has been difficult also because teachers have been largely excluded from the process of curriculum reform. The decision to follow an OBE approach was made by the DoE and the curriculum development process was left to a selected group of “experts”, excluding the majority of teachers from the decision-making process regarding curriculum. Teachers were seen as the implementers of curriculum policy. It is therefore not surprising that they were faced with many difficulties. This study thus illuminates the critical importance of the participation of teachers in curriculum reform and provides empirical evidence for the inclusion of teachers at every level of the reform process.

In addition, the study also illuminates that the three pillars (curriculum development, learning materials and teacher training) essential to translate the new curriculum into practice were neither fully in place, nor were they aligned. Thus, the challenge facing policy makers, curriculum developers, teacher developers and producers of learning materials is to provide accessible ways of translating the national curriculum policy framework into practice (Potenza & Monyokolo, 1999: 244). The need to address these challenges, so that teachers and learners can negotiate their way successfully through curriculum 2005, is aptly captured by Potenza & Monyokolo (1999: 244), borrowing from Alan Paton’s, *Cry The Beloved Country*: “...they need, for the rest of the journey, a star that will not play false to them, a compass that will not lie”.

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ANNEXURE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **Years of Service:** _____

Learning Area/s: _____

- 1.1 Who was involved in decision-making regarding participation in the OBE pilot programme?
- 1.2 Do you feel that you should have been involved? Why?
2. How did you experience the change from the traditional approach to OBE?
- 3.1 Were there any difficulties/obstacles/challenges that you experienced in implementing OBE?
- 3.2 How did you cope with/overcome these obstacles?
4. Were there any successes and achievements that you experienced in implementing OBE in your classroom?
5. Comment on how you feel your learners experienced OBE?
6. How did you feel about the suspension of the pilot programme? Why?
7. Do you currently make use of strategies that you used in the pilot programme?
8. What are the most important things/lessons you have learnt through the pilot?
9. Is there any other comment that you would like to make about your experience of OBE during the pilot programme?